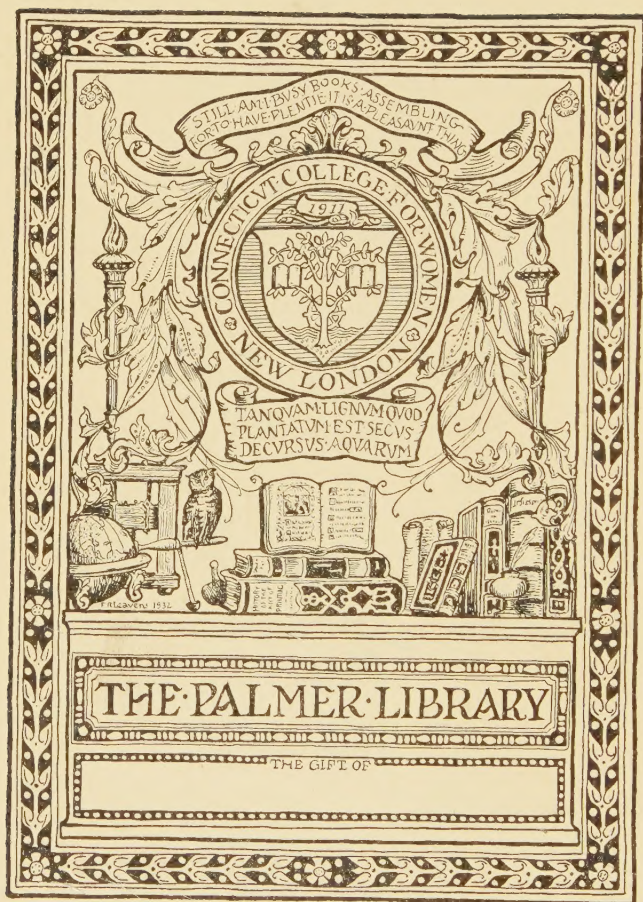
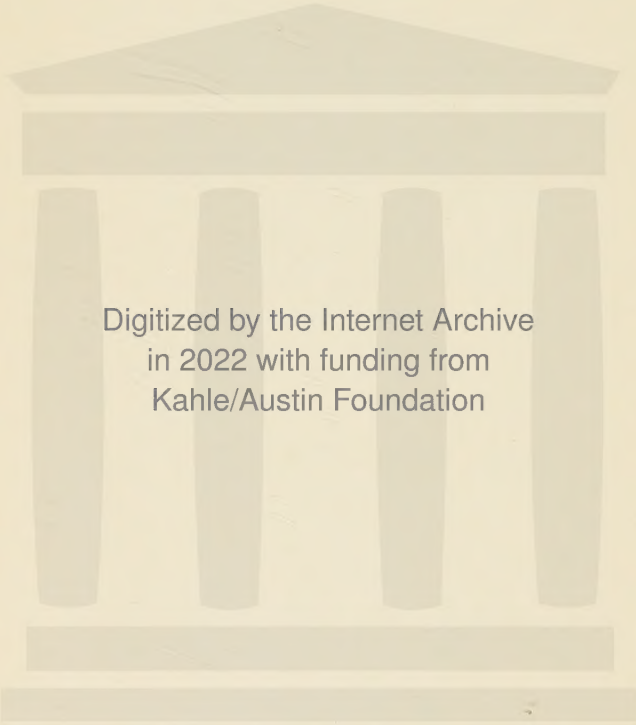


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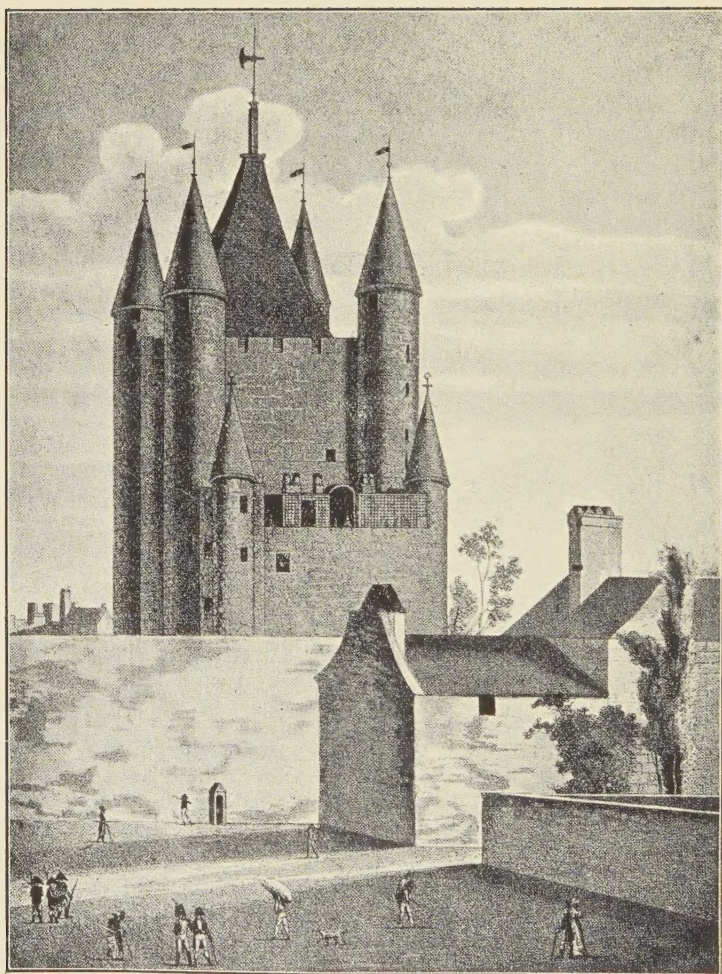
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MYSTERIES OF THE SEA

STRANGE ADVENTURES OF  
THE SEA

PERIL OF THE SEA





THE TEMPLE

*Frontispiece*



# HERE ARE MYSTERIES

BY

J. G. LOCKHART

AUTHOR OF 'MYSTERIES OF THE SEA,' 'STRANGE  
ADVENTURES OF THE SEA,' ETC.



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*THE HEART OF GREAT  
MONTROSE*







## THE HEART OF GREAT MONTROSE

### I

**I**N the early afternoon of Tuesday, 21st May, 1650, the citizens of Edinburgh were thronging the steep High Street; they were overflowing into the little wynds and alleys that lead out of it; they were clustering about the windows of the tall houses that overlook it; they were struggling to gain some point from which they might view the passing of one of the strangest and most tragic processions that the capital had ever witnessed. They had come out to watch the bailies taking a prisoner down the street to the cross, midway between the Tolbooth and the Tron Kirk, where, by order of the Scottish Parliament, a thirty-foot gallows had been set up for the hanging of James Graham, Marquis of Montrose.

That the victim was Viceroy of Scotland; that his judges had just issued a loyal invitation to his master, King Charles II., to return to his Scottish kingdom; that what Montrose had done he had done by royal order; and that he was

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without question the most illustrious of living Scots—these were facts which had carried no weight with his judges. They could neither forget nor forgive what he was or what he had achieved. He had harried the glens of Argyll; he had frightened the Lowland farmers; and—worst of all—he had dared to raise his voice and unsheathe his sword against the Congregation of the Faithful. These were crimes for which there could be but one penalty.

The trial and execution of Montrose were carried through with significant haste. Charles himself was expected to arrive in Edinburgh at any moment, and, though he had his share of the fatal facility of the Stuarts for bringing their best friends to utter ruin, he could hardly have stood by while his Viceroy was hanged like a common criminal.

But the story of the life and death of Montrose—soldier, statesman and poet—has been recorded with abundance of detail by Mark Napier,<sup>1</sup> and again, in an admirable memoir, by Colonel John Buchan.<sup>2</sup> Here I intend to deal only with one aspect of it.

When Montrose landed in the Orkneys towards the end of March, 1650, he was embarked on an adventure that could only have one ending. In Scotland the Commissioners of the Estates were

<sup>1</sup> Mark Napier : *Memoirs of the Marquis of Montrose*.

<sup>2</sup> John Buchan : *The Marquis of Montrose*.

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halting between two opinions. They had broken with Cromwell in a quarrel which was ultimately to lead them to the rout of Dunbar, and they had not quite made their peace with Charles, whose father they had lately handed over to the English Parliament and to execution. To understand the complications of Scottish politics in the early days of the Commonwealth, it must be remembered that there were two principal parties in the north. The first was Royalist by sympathy and by tradition, had fought for the King through the Civil War, and looked to Montrose as its leader. The second was frankly Nationalist and Presbyterian; it cared very little for either King or Parliament, and very much for that strange tyranny, based on the Old Testament and the teachings of John Calvin, which it had come to regard as the ideal form of government; its leader was the Duke of Argyll, and it was prepared to make friends in any quarter from which support might be obtained for the pure doctrines of Presbyterianism and the House of Campbell. During the Civil War it had supported the Parliament; now, with the victory of Cromwell, it had become apprehensive for its independence, and was veering round to the King again.

It was characteristic of Charles and his advisers in Paris that they should have thought it feasible to make use of both parties in Scotland; and that, while negotiations were proceeding with

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Argyll and the Commissioners of the Estates, Montrose was sent on his expedition into the Highlands. The plan, it is true, sounded plausible. Montrose was to land in the north; the loyalist party was to rise and join him; and the Scottish Estates, caught, as it were, between two fires, were hurriedly to come to terms with their lawful king. The Restoration in Scotland, thus effected, would therefore be headed not by Argyll, whose record was his worst commendation, nor by committees of squabbling ministers, but by Montrose, whose loyalty was as much above dispute as were his powers of leadership.

Such, probably, was the plan. That it miscarried so tragically was due to the fact that it ignored the personal element. If few men have been so well loved by their friends as Montrose, few have been so stoutly hated by their enemies; and to have supposed that Argyll and the Estates would ever willingly have submitted to his leadership showed a complete misunderstanding of Scottish affairs. The events of the Civil War had created vendettas which death alone could end, and it is certain that if the Estates had really been faced with the dilemma prepared for them by Charles and his counsellors, they would have made their peace with Cromwell in order to carry on their war with Montrose.

However, they were spared the necessity of so embarrassing a choice. The expected rising of



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the clans never took place ; and for his last campaign Montrose had four or five hundred Danish troops, a thousand raw recruits from Orkney, a handful of mounted gentry and little else, to oppose Leslie and the trained army of the Covenant. The odds were heavily against him. Yet with undiminished courage he marched south to Carbisdale, where his wretched troops were scattered by Leslie's veterans, and he himself, wounded and spent, was forced off the field by his friends. For some days he wandered the hills in disguise ; but a price was on his head and his enemies were hot on his tracks. He spent two days on the hillside, and a third day at a herd's shieling, from which he watched the chase pour past his hiding-place. But his plight was desperate ; he was alone, he was wounded, and he was nearly starving when he was found by Neil MacLeod of Assynt. MacLeod had him taken to his castle of Ardvreck, and sent word to Leslie of the capture, for which he was awarded the sum of £2000 Scots (about £1360), which he does not appear ever to have received, and 5000 pounds of oatmeal, of which tradition has it that on delivery two-thirds were sour. The curse of the thirty pieces of silver seems to have clung round the transaction.

So Montrose was brought south to Edinburgh, on a journey which most Scotsmen would prefer to forget.

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“ We have seen him seated on a quilt of rags, in the squalid garb of a vagrant, his legs tied under the belly of a miserable Highland pony ; pleading for a draught of water, ‘ being then in the first crisis of a high fever ’ ; reposing his wounded and fevered frame at night on a truss of straw in the fields ; preached and railed at by a rabid minister, insulting him with the story of Agag ; tortured with that last glimpse of his weeping boys, at the scene of his early love ; and finally, submitted with elaborate and exhausting indignity to the gaze of his bitterest enemies, through that city which he had saved from destruction when its authorities were at his feet.” <sup>1</sup>

He was met at the Nethergate of the capital by the magistrates, and was drawn up the Canon-gate to the Tolbooth in the hangman’s cart, bearing himself with such dignity and courage that the covenanting mob which had come to curse very nearly stayed to bless. There followed the farce of his trial in Parliament and the inevitable sentence—“ to be hanged upon a gallows thirty feet high, three hours, at Edinburgh Cross ; to have his head stricken off and hanged upon Edinburgh Tolbooth, and his arms and legs to be hanged up in other public towns in the kingdom, as Glasgow, etc., and his body to be buried at the common burying-place, in case

<sup>1</sup> Mark Napier : *Memoirs of the Marquis of Montrose.*

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excommunication from the Kirk was taken off ; or else to be buried where those are buried that were hanged.”<sup>1</sup>

This barbarous sentence was carried out shortly after two o'clock on the afternoon of Tuesday, 21st May. Alike in his demeanour, in the noble terms of his last speech, and in his final prayer—“God have mercy on this afflicted land”—Montrose died as he had lived, the pattern of a Cavalier and a Christian gentleman. We can well believe, as the unsigned letter in the British Museum tells us, that “he hath overcome more men by his death, in Scotland, than he would have done if he had lived. For I never saw a sweeter carriage in a man in all my life.”

### II

This brief account of Montrose's end may be thought alien to the purpose of this study, which is not the life of Montrose, but a more trivial subject, the curious story of his heart and its wanderings. Yet in following the strange tale which has come down to us in the Napier Letters, we should keep, if we are to obtain the right perspective, some picture of the man himself before our eyes. That vicissitudes so unusual should befall the heart of any man after death would be sufficiently striking ; that they should have befallen the heart of such a man

<sup>1</sup> Letter in British Museum.

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as Montrose attaches tenfold interest to the narrative.

According to the terms of the sentence the body of Montrose was cut down after it had hung for three hours on the gallows. It was then dismembered. The limbs were sent to four of the chief towns of Scotland, where they were exposed to the public view until the Restoration, when they were given a reverent and stately burial. The head was fixed to an iron pin at the west end of the Tolbooth, presumably as a warning to the citizens of Edinburgh against undue loyalty. And the trunk, since the man had died unrepentant, was taken out and buried on the marsh of Boroughmuir, where lay the dust and bones of the city's felons. Perhaps the crowning indignity is an entry in the City accounts : " Item, to six workmen that carried the corps of James Graham, and buried the same in the Burgh-moor, £2. 0. 0."

Very soon, however, after these grim events, it began to be whispered about Edinburgh that the body of the great Marquis had not been suffered to rest undisturbed in its ignoble burial-place, and that the grave had been broken into a few days subsequent to the execution of the sentence. One contemporary account<sup>1</sup> reports that the body " was thrown into a hole, where afterwards it was digged up by night and the linen in which

<sup>1</sup> *Montrose Redivivus*, 1652.

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it was folded stolen away.” John Lamont tells another tale in his *Diary*: “For his body, it was carried out and buried in the Burgh-moor (a place where malefactors are interred). It is reported by some that it was taken up again that same very night, and carried to some other place by his friends.”

The true version of what happened did not emerge until nearly ten years later, when Charles was seated on the throne of his fathers and the head of Argyll was about to replace that of Montrose on the west end of the Tolbooth; when, in short, the truth was no longer too dangerous to be told. The story appeared in a popular daily paper called the *Mercurius Caledonius*, the editor of which was Thomas Sydserf or Saintserf, a follower of the dead Royalist leader. Saintserf gave an account of the magnificent ceremony following the Restoration, in which the scattered remains of Montrose, reverently gathered together, were accorded a state burial in sacred soil. The coffin, he wrote, taken from the Boroughmuir, was easily identified, for it “had been formerly broke a purpose, by some of his friends, in that place nigh his chest, whence they stole his heart, embalmed in the costliest manner, and so reserves it.”

Saintserf was also the author of a full account of the funeral ceremony, in which further par-



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ticulars are given, which place the matter beyond dispute : <sup>1</sup>

“ All that belonged to the body of this great hero was carefully re-collected ; only his heart, which, two days after the murder, in spite of the traitors, was, by conveyance of some adventurous spirits appointed by that noble and honourable lady, the Lady Napier, taken out and embalmed in the most costly manner by that skilful chirurgion and apothecary, Mr. James Callendar ; then put in a rich box of gold and sent by the same noble lady to the now Lord Marquis,<sup>2</sup> who was then in Flanders.”

This, then, is the true story, and Napier goes so far as to suggest that Saintserf himself was one of the “ adventurous spirits ” who made that secret expedition to the Boroughmuir.<sup>3</sup> Certainly the story was not contradicted either by Lady Napier or by the young Marquis to whom the gold box was alleged to have been sent. The Napiers, it will be remembered, had been among Montrose’s most devoted adherents. Old Lord Napier of Merchiston, who had married Montrose’s sister, Lady Margaret Graham, at the age of seventy had fought by his brother-in-law’s side at Philiphaugh, while his son, the second Lord Napier, had accompanied Montrose on his campaigns and had shared his brief exile on the

<sup>1</sup> Saintserf’s *Relation*, 1651.      <sup>2</sup> of Montrose.

<sup>3</sup> Napier : *Memoirs of the Marquis of Montrose*.

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Continent. His wife, young Lady Napier, had been a special favourite, and, we are told, Montrose had frequently promised that she should have his heart when he was dead. It can therefore be understood that in the hour of her grief—her friend murdered (albeit judicially), her husband a refugee abroad, his property sequestered, and the cause for which the Napiers of two generations had made such sacrifices brought to disaster—she should have recalled the old promise and tried to rescue from the grisly indignities of the hangman some tiny memorial of the man whom she had come to reverence above all others.

The custom of extracting and embalming the hearts of distinguished men was at one time frequently practised. In Scotland, of course, there is the precedent of the heart of King Robert the Bruce, the story of which Sir Walter Scott tells in his *Tales of a Grandfather*. When Bruce was at the point of death, he summoned to his bedside some of his principal nobles, to whom he declared his contrition for all the sins he had committed, and more especially for the killing of John Comyn on consecrated ground. He had intended, he said, in expiation to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, but so disturbed had been the state of Scotland that he had never been able to fulfil his wish. Since, therefore, in his lifetime the pilgrimage



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had not been possible, he begged his oldest friend and stoutest supporter, Lord James Douglas, to carry his heart to the Holy Land. After the Bruce's death, Lord James (the Black Douglas as he was called) attempted to carry out the dead king's desire. The heart was extracted, embalmed and placed in a silver casket, and the Douglas, attended by a number of Scottish nobles, set out with it for Palestine. The journey, however, was never accomplished. On their way to the East the Scots visited the King of Castile, whose country was being invaded at that time by the Moors of Granada. The visitors were persuaded to stay and lend their assistance, and in the battle which followed the Douglas was slain. When, the story runs, he saw that he was surrounded and could not escape, he flung the casket containing the heart into the midst of his enemies, exclaiming, "Lead on as thou wert wont to do," and rushed forward to his death. The Scots, discouraged by the loss of their leader, made no further attempt to reach the Holy Land, but returned to Scotland, bringing with them the heart of Bruce, which they had retrieved from the battlefield, and which was finally buried beneath the high altar of Melrose Abbey.

This, however, is a digression, and we must revert to the heart of Montrose, which travelled further, and met with even more surprising adventures, than the heart of Bruce. Following

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Saintserf's account we have traced it to Holland, where the young Marquis was then living in exile ; but at this point there is a gap in its history which neither Saintserf nor any other chronicler has filled. The relic disappeared, but when or how we are not told. Mark Napier, indeed, hazarded a guess, which, in the absence of any confirming evidence, can scarcely be accepted as conclusive. In 1648 Montrose had presented his nephew, young Lord Napier, with a miniature of himself " in the breadth of ane sixpence." In a Scottish contemporary chronicle we learn that while Napier was travelling on the Continent he was robbed of all his money ; and it is fair to presume that the miniature, which has also disappeared, was among his missing possessions. Now we know that young Montrose returned to Scotland in or before 1654, as in that year his presence is reported with a Royalist force in the Highlands. It is therefore a reasonable conjecture that before leaving Holland on what was likely to prove a risky enterprise, he would have entrusted anything that he particularly valued to someone for safe keeping ; and it is, again, quite likely that his choice would have fallen on his cousin, young Napier. If these—admittedly rather wide—suppositions are correct, the heart may have shared the fate of that unlucky young nobleman's other valuables, and have fallen into the hands of some Flanders cutpurse.

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Whatever the true explanation may be, it is probable that the heart was lost somewhere in the Low Countries, for it was in Holland that, many years later, it reappeared. Curiously enough it was recovered by no less a person than the fifth Lord Napier, great-grandson of the lady who had originally secured it. The full story is told in a long letter (dated 1st July, 1826) from Sir Alexander Johnston of Carnsalloch in Dumfriesshire to his daughters—a letter which is our sole authority for the later adventures of the heart of Montrose.<sup>1</sup> Sir Alexander's mother was a daughter of the fifth Lord Napier, a connection which accounts for his intimate acquaintance with the story.

“ I have great pleasure,” he wrote, “ at your request, in putting down upon paper, for your amusement, all the circumstances, as well those which I have heard from my grandmother, Lady Napier, and my mother, as those which I can myself recollect, relative to the story of the heart of the Marquis of Montrose, and the silver urn which is represented as standing upon a table before her in the portrait of the wife of the second Lord Napier, which we have in our drawing-room.

“ My mother was, as you know, the only surviving daughter; at the time of his death, of

<sup>1</sup> Mark Napier; *Memoirs of the Marquis of Montrose*, Appendix I.



JAMES GRAHAM, MARQUIS OF MONTROSE

*To face page 16*



## THE HEART OF GREAT MONTROSE

her father, Francis the fifth Lord Napier of Merchiston; owing to this circumstance, she was a particular favourite of his, and was educated by him with the greatest care at Merchiston. The room in which she and her brothers, when children, used to say their lessons to him, was situated in that part of the tower of Merchiston in which John Napier had made all his mathematical discoveries, and in which, when she was a child, there were still a few of his books and instruments, and some of the diagrams which he had drawn upon the walls. In this room there were also four family portraits: one of John Napier, the Inventor of the Logarithms; one of the first Marquis of Montrose, who was executed at Edinburgh in 1650; one of Lady Margaret Graham, who was the marquis's sister, and was married to John Napier's son, Archibald the first Lord Napier; and one of Lady Elizabeth Erskine, who was the daughter of John the eighth Earl of Mar, and who was married to the marquis's nephew, Archibald second Lord Napier.

“My mother's father, by way of amusing her after her lessons were over, used frequently to relate to her all the remarkable events which are connected with the history of the four persons represented in these portraits; and perceiving that she was particularly interested



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in the subject, he dwelt at length upon the history of the urn containing the heart of Montrose, as represented in the portrait of the wife of the second Lord Napier.

“He related to her the following circumstances concerning it. He said that the first Marquis of Montrose, being extremely partial to his nephew the second Lord Napier and his wife, had always promised at his death to leave his heart to the latter, as a mark of the affection which he felt towards her, for the unremitting kindness which she had shown to him in all the different vicissitudes of his life and fortune ; that, on the marquis’s execution, a confidential friend of her own, employed by Lady Napier, succeeded in obtaining for her the heart of the marquis ; that she, after it had been embalmed by her desire, enclosed it in a little steel case, made of the blade of Montrose’s sword, placed this case in a gold filigree box, which had been given to John Napier, the Inventor of Logarithms, by a doge of Venice, while he was on his travels in Italy, and deposited this box in a large silver urn, which had been presented some years before by the marquis to her husband, Lord Napier ; that it had been Lady Napier’s first intention to keep the gold box containing Montrose’s heart in the silver urn upon a little table near her bed-side, and that she had the portrait of herself, of which the one in the



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drawing-room is a copy, painted at that time ; but that she had subsequently altered her intention, and transmitted the gold box, with Montrose's heart in it, to the young Marquis of Montrose, who was then abroad with her husband, Lord Napier, in exile ; that, for some reason or another, the gold box and heart had been lost sight of by both families, that of Montrose and that of Napier, for some time, until an intimate friend of his (the fifth Lord Napier), a gentleman of Guelderland, recognised in the collection of a collector of curiosities in Holland the identical gold filigree box with the steel case, and procured it for him, when he was in that country ; but that he never could trace what had become of the large silver urn."

Later on in the same letter Johnston gave a detailed description of the heart and its case, as he remembered them.

" The steel case was of the size and shape of an egg. It was opened by pressing down a little knob, as is done in opening a watch-case. Inside was a little parcel, supposed to contain all that remained of Montrose's heart, wrapped up in a piece of coarse cloth, and done over with a substance like glue. The gold filigree case was similar in workmanship to the ancient Venetian work in gold which you have frequently seen, particularly to that of the gilt worked vases in which the Venetian flasks at

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Warwick Castle are enclosed. I have none of the fragments ; they were always kept along with the writings on the subject within the silver urn. My grandfather never had a doubt that the steel case contained the heart of Montrose.”

We may well believe that Lord Napier was right in his identification, and that the gold filigree box containing a steel case, which the “gentleman from Guelderland” sent to him, was the very same that his great-grandmother despatched to Holland.

So, after many years, the heart returned to the Napier family, by whom it was naturally regarded as a most precious heirloom. Its story, however, was by no means completed.

When Lord Napier died, his daughter Hester, afterwards the wife of Mr. Samuel Johnston and the mother of Sir Alexander, was a girl of sixteen. She had been for some years his constant companion, and was travelling to France with him and her mother when he was seized, at Lewes in Sussex, with a severe attack of gout from which he never recovered.

“Two days before his death”—to quote again from Sir Alexander’s letter—“finding himself very weak, and believing at the time that there was little or no chance of his recovery, he told my mother that, owing to a

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great part of his family property having been forfeited at the time of Cromwell's usurpation, and to the unexpected expense he had been at in plans for carrying the Caledonian Canal into effect, he was much afraid that Merchiston would be sold after his death, and that he would have nothing to leave to her ; but that, however, as she had always taken an interest in the story of the heart of Montrose, he would give her in his lifetime, which he then did in the presence of her mother, the gold filigree box containing it ; and trusted that it would be valuable to her as the only token of his affection which he might be able to leave her ; and that it might hereafter remind her of the many happy hours which he had spent in instructing her while a child in the tower of Merchiston ; and that, whatever vicissitudes of fortune might befall her, it might always afford her the satisfaction of being able to show that she was descended from persons who were distinguished in the history of Scotland, by their piety, their science, their courage and their patriotism."

Some years later Hester married Samuel Johnston, and the heart of Montrose set out once more on its travels.

"After my mother's marriage, and when I was about five years old, she, my father and myself, were on the way to India, in the fleet commanded by Commodore Johnston, when it

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was attacked off the Cape de Verd Islands by the French squadron under Suffren. One of the French frigates engaged the Indiaman in which we were, and my father, with our captain's permission, took command of four of the quarter-deck guns. My mother refused to go below, but remained on the quarter-deck with me at her side, declaring that no wife ought to quit her husband in a moment of such peril, and that we should both share my father's fate. A shot from the frigate struck one of these guns, killed two of the men, and with the splinters which it tore off the deck, knocked my father down, wounded my mother severely in the arm, and bruised the muscles of my right hand so severely, that, as you know, it is even now difficult for me at times to write or even to hold a pen. My mother held me during the action with one hand, and with the other hand she held a large thick velvet reticule, in which she, conceiving that if the frigate captured the Indiaman the French crew would plunder the ship, had placed some of the things which she valued the most, including the pictures of her father and mother, and the gold filigree case containing the heart of Montrose. It was supposed that the splinter must have first struck the reticule, which hung loose in her hand, for, to her great distress, the gold filigree box, which was in it, was shattered to pieces, but

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the steel case had resisted the blow. The frigate that attacked us was called off, and next day Commodore Johnston and Sir John M'Pherson, who was with him in the flag-ship, came on board of the Indiaman, and complimented my father and mother in the highest terms for the encouragement which they had given the crew of their ship."

The heart, therefore, reached India intact, although during the engagement the gold filigree box had been destroyed. This box, it will be recalled, was in itself a relic of considerable value and interest, having been presented by a doge of Venice to John Napier, the inventor of logarithms.

"When in India, at Madura," Sir Alexander continued, "my mother found a celebrated native goldsmith, who, partly from the fragments she had saved, and partly from her description, made as beautiful a gold filigree box as the one that had been destroyed. She caused him also to make for her a silver urn, like that in the picture, and to engrave on the outside of it in Tamil and Telugoo, the two languages most generally understood throughout the southern peninsula of India, a short account of the most remarkable events of Montrose's life, and of the circumstances of his death. In this urn my mother enclosed the



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gold filigree box containing the case with Montrose's heart, also two fragments of the former filigree box, and a certificate, signed by the gentleman of Guelderland, explaining the various circumstances which, in his and my grandfather's opinion, unquestionably proved it to contain the heart of Montrose. The urn was placed upon an ebony table that stood in the drawing-room of the house at Madura, which is now my property, and which I intend for a Hindoo College. My mother's anxiety about it gave rise to a report amongst the natives of the country that it was a talisman, and that whoever possessed it could never be wounded in battle or taken prisoner."

The reputation which the heart had won as a talisman had a most unfortunate result. It was stolen from the Johnstons by a native who had heard of its fame, and who scented a chance of a handsome profit for himself. Thus for a second time it disappeared, and for some 20 years every effort to trace it proved unavailing, though it was rumoured to have been purchased by a powerful chief who lived not very far from Madura. Eventually Sir Alexander himself was responsible for restoring it to his family.

"My father was in the habit of sending me every year, during the hunting and shooting season, to stay with some one of the native

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chiefs who lived in the neighbourhood of Madura, for four months at a time, in order to acquire the various languages, and to practise the native gymnastic exercises. One day, while I was hunting with the chief who was said to have purchased the urn, my horse was attacked by a wild hog, which we were pursuing, but I succeeded in wounding it so severely with my hunting pike, that the chief soon afterwards overtook and killed it. He was pleased with my conduct upon this occasion, and asked, before all his attendants, in what manner I would wish him to show his respect and regard for me. I said, if the report was really true, that he had bought the silver urn which belonged to my mother, he would do me a great favour by restoring it; and to induce him to do so, I explained to him all the circumstances connected with it. He replied that it was quite true that he had purchased it for a large sum, without knowing that it had been stolen from my mother, and he immediately added that one brave man should always attend to the wishes of another brave man, whatever his religion or his nation might be; that he therefore considered it his duty to fulfil the wishes of the brave man whose heart was in the urn, and whose wish it was that his heart should be kept by his descendants; and, for that reason, he would willingly restore it to my



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mother. Next day, after presenting me with six of his finest dogs and two of his best matchlocks, he dismissed me with the urn in my possession, and with a present from himself to my mother of a gold dress, and some shawls, accompanied by a letter, expressing his great regret that he had innocently been the cause of her great distress by purchasing the urn, which he assured her he would not have done had he known that it had been stolen from her.

“This was the native chief so celebrated throughout the Southern Peninsula of India, who, thirty or forty years ago, rebelled against the authority of his supposed sovereign, the Nabob of Arcot, and who, after behaving with the most undaunted courage, was conquered by a detachment of English troops, and executed with many members of his family, as is fully described in the first volume of Major Welsh’s *Military Reminiscences*. When, in 1807, I visited the site of this chief’s former capital, and the scenes of my early sports in the Southern Peninsula of India, there were still two of the old servants alive, who used to have charge of his hunting dogs when I was with him. When they heard who I was, they came to me as I was travelling through the woods of their former master, and gave me a very detailed account of his last adventures, and of the fortitude with which he met his death,

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telling me among other anecdotes of him, that when he heard that he was to be executed immediately, he alluded to the story of the urn, and expressed a hope to some of his attendants that those who admired his conduct would preserve his heart in the same manner as the European warrior's heart had been preserved in the silver urn."

So, as a result of Sir Alexander's prowess in pig-sticking, the heart returned to its former owner ; but not, unfortunately, for very long.

The Johnstons returned to Europe in 1792, travelling across France on their way home to England. They had reached Boulogne and were on the point of crossing the Channel when the Revolutionary Government issued an edict requiring all plate and gold and silver ornaments to be surrendered. Probably, if Mrs. Johnston could have brought herself to sacrifice the silver urn and the gold box, she would have been allowed to take the steel case with her out of the country. But evidently this course did not appeal to her. On the other hand, she decided that to attempt to smuggle the urn and its contents on board ship was too perilous an undertaking ; while it was unthinkable that she should hand them over to the French officers, who would know little of and care less for the memory of Montrose, and who would probably have melted down the urn and the box for the sake of the metal of which they

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were made, and perhaps have thrown the more precious enclosure away as valueless. In her embarrassment she did what many people would have done in the circumstances, but what, in fact, was quite fatal to her purpose. She decided to part with the relic for a time. She sought for someone into whose keeping it could be confided until it was possible to remove it to England. Her choice fell upon an English lady called Knowles, then resident in Boulogne, who promised to keep it in a safe hiding-place for her. So the matter was arranged, and the Johnstons sailed home. Unfortunately, however, not very long afterwards, Mrs. (or Miss) Knowles died, and so carefully had she concealed the treasure entrusted to her that not a trace of it could be found. The Johnstons, of course, made every effort to recover it, but at the time they could do very little. From 1792 to 1815 Britain and France were—with two short intervals—continuously at war, and with the lapse of twenty-three years any clues which may have been left, and which might have disclosed the hiding-place of the heart, had vanished; so that in the end Sir Alexander was reluctantly compelled to abandon the search.

As more than one hundred and thirty years have passed since the heart of Montrose was lost, we may doubt whether it will ever reappear. Yet stranger things have happened. One day, perhaps, someone, exploring the dusty contents

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of an old shop in the back streets of Boulogne, may chance upon a little gold box of Indian craftsmanship. Opening it, he may even find that it contains a steel case "the size and shape of an egg." Let him then be careful of his discovery, for in his hands may be resting no less a treasure than the heart of the great Montrose.



*THE DISAPPEARANCE OF  
JOHN ORTH*







## THE DISAPPEARANCE OF JOHN ORTH

**T**HE year 1849 was a time of tragedy in the ancient Kingdom of Hungary. Louis Kossuth, patriot and president of the short-lived Magyar Republic, had fled, after burying the venerated Crown of St. Stephen, so that it might not fall into the hands of the enemy ; Gorgey, the commander-in-chief of the National Army, had betrayed his troops, his arms and his honour to the invading Russians ; and General Haynau (nicknamed the Hyena), with the aid of the Austrians and Croats, was re-establishing the authority of the young Emperor Francis Joseph by methods which were peculiarly his own. After the campaign followed the reprisals. For a time Hungary became a vast slaughter-house, in which the blood of the noblest in the land mingled with that of the peasants from the Hungarian Plain and the townsmen whom the eloquence of Kossuth had drawn into rebellion. In that general punishment neither age nor sex nor class was spared, and they counted themselves fortunate who escaped with the minor,

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though humiliating, penalty of a public flogging. Haynau, who played the congenial part of Chief Executioner, was rash enough a little later to visit England. His reception is still remembered. His infamy had preceded him, and when one day he called at the brewery of Messrs. Barclay, Perkins and Co., the draymen set upon and soundly trounced the man who had ordered women to be flogged in Hungary.

But in 1849, deeply as public opinion in Western Europe was stirred by the savage reprisals authorised by the Austrian Government, not a finger was raised on behalf of Haynau's victims. The young Emperor, from whose reputed Liberal sympathies so much had once been hoped, stood by unprotesting. He pardoned, almost haphazard, a few wretched people ; otherwise he was content to allow the mockery that masqueraded as justice to take its course.

Among those who perished in the holocaust was young Karolyi, a member of one of the noblest houses of Hungary. Though his ancestors had spent themselves in the cause of the Hapsburgs his personal treason was unforgiven. The Emperor was coldly obdurate before the frantic appeals of his mother, his relations and his friends. The young man was a rebel : he must pay the penalty : there was no more to be said. When the news of Karolyi's execution was carried to his mother, distracted with grief she uttered the

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famous curse which through the long years of Francis Joseph's reign was never forgotten :

“ May Heaven and Hell blast his happiness ! May his family be exterminated ! May he be smitten in the persons of those he loves ! May his life be wretched, and may his children be brought to ruin ! ”

It is curious to note how faithfully in the course of time the calamities pronounced in these wild words fell upon Francis Joseph. Such happiness as he had withered away as tragedy followed tragedy in his family and his household. His wife, whom he once loved, sometimes treated ill, and never understood, was estranged from him, left him for long periods, and was at last to die by the dagger of an assassin. His brother Maximilian was brutally shot at Queretaro, a blow perhaps to his dynastic pride rather than to his affections ; while his sister-in-law, poor demented creature, wandered from Court to Court, seeking the help which could not be given. His only son Rudolph was to die, probably by his own hand, in the sordid and mysterious tragedy of Meyerling. And one by one, as though prompted by some vindictive genius, the members of his family were to turn against him, to defy his commands, and in some cases to dishonour those traditions which he so jealously guarded. The curse seemed to follow Francis Joseph to the grave. In 1914,

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his heir, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, was murdered at Serajevo, and the war, which this deed directly provoked, ended in the fall of the Hapsburg dynasty and disruption of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Although Francis Joseph was spared the spectacle of this last calamity (he died in 1916), the signs of impending doom were there for all to see, and the Emperor's last days must have been haunted by the fearful dilemma of a conflict in which victory would have been only a degree less disastrous than defeat to the Empire and the dynasty to which he had devoted his life.

The greater misfortunes of Francis Joseph's reign are inseparably linked with the history of his time, and have therefore received due attention from the historian. The episode of John Orth, or—to give him his proper title—the Archduke John Salvator of Tuscany, was by comparison almost a trivial affair, but sufficiently mysterious to merit some notice, and sufficiently important to cause Francis Joseph a vast amount of annoyance.

The Archduke John Salvator was the son of Leopold II., the dispossessed Grand Duke of Tuscany, and of the Princess Marguerite of the Two Sicilies. The Tuscan Royal House was, of course, a cadet branch of the Hapsburgs, and John was therefore a cousin of Francis Joseph's and a member of that amazing dynastic family

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over which the Emperor exercised so autocratic a rule. He was born in 1852. We know very little about his early life, probably because there was very little to know; but his biographer, Madame de Faucigny-Lucinge,<sup>1</sup> tells us that he was a precocious and original child, took a huge delight in shocking the formal old ladies of his mother's establishment, and at an early age showed a zest for learning and an intelligence rather unusual in one of his family. For a young archduke there was, by tradition, only one possible career, the army, and as soon as he was of an age John Salvator was given his commission. His professional capacity, we are told, was high, and his promotion was rapid. At twenty-four he became a Colonel of Artillery, and at twenty-nine a General; but we may suspect that he owed his speedy advancement more to the fact that he was an archduke than to his own merits. In 1878 he served through the campaign in Bosnia, where he seems to have acquitted himself well.

So far so good. John had shown himself to be all that could reasonably be expected of an archduke, and a good deal more than had been realised of some of his family. The Emperor, at least, was quite satisfied with him, and no one else's opinion mattered very much. Unfortunately, however, during these years of army life John had developed ambitions other than those

<sup>1</sup> *L'Archiduc Jean Salvator.*



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of a purely military character. He aspired to fame as a musician and a writer. He composed a waltz which achieved a certain passing popularity in Vienna, and, fired by its success, followed it up with an opera, *Les Assassins*, which was produced anonymously at the Viennese Opera House, and met, it must be confessed, with only a tepid reception.

These activities may have been unusual in an archduke, but at any rate they were harmless ; whereas his literary excursions were distinctly provocative. He wrote a series of pamphlets in criticism of the Austro-Hungarian Army ; and, though they appeared over a variety of pseudonyms, the identity of the author very soon became an open secret in Court and military circles. This, it can be understood, was very disquieting to his august relative, Francis Joseph, who liked his officers to observe a proper professional reticence, and his archdukes to be decorative and not to interfere in matters of state. It was not as though John had merely written a text-book or two of a staid and stereotyped sort, dull but educative, unoriginal but equally unexceptionable. On the contrary, this rash young man had brandished a most contentious pen. He had expressed his opinions without reserve, and his opinion, summarised, was that a good deal was amiss with the army in which he served. Its artillery was obsolete, its frontier defences

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were antiquated, its system reeked with anachronisms, and it was being ruined by a pack of elderly generals who were living on reputations they had won in days when the Archduke was in his cradle.

Now, a young man in his 'twenties' who sets out to redress all the wrongs of the world in which he lives is probably either a genius or an ass. And John was certainly not a genius. Whether he was right or wrong in the matter of his criticisms is scarcely the question. It was the way in which he made them that counted; for, while they entirely failed to effect any of the reforms for which their author pleaded, they undoubtedly succeeded in giving great offence to the high military authorities.

Reports of the Archduke's literary ventures soon reached the ears of the Emperor, who dealt with his indiscreet cousin much as the vice-chancellor of the University of Oxford deals with an erring undergraduate. He rusticated him. In other words, he sent him off to Cracow in Galicia, where he would be removed from the heady influence of the capital, and perhaps from associates who had encouraged him in his lapse from the standard of deportment expected of an archduke. Unfortunately the cure failed. Literature is a disease from which the patient, once attacked, cannot easily free his system. Moreover, Cracow afforded new temptations of its own. It was close to the Russian frontier,

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and it was an important fortress. Before the Archduke had been there very long he rushed into print once more with a pamphlet on fortifications, and capped it with a lecture at the Military Club on "Drill or Education," into which he introduced some adverse reflections on the Archduke Albert, the hero of the Lombardy campaign of 1866 and the Grand Old Man of the Army. This was going too far. Albert promptly complained to the Emperor, and John was moved on to Linz, with the warning that he was to regard himself as in pretty serious disgrace.

Once more the punishment failed. Linz was a dull spot, and for want of a better occupation the Archduke began to dabble in politics. At that time the chancelleries of Europe were looking round for a ruler for the new principality of Bulgaria. It was a business to be approached with caution : there were dynastic interests to be safeguarded, sensibilities which must not be wounded, Powers which must be placated, cajoled and guided to the desired ends down the tortuous paths of diplomacy. Into this delicate negotiation the Archduke blundered, as a St. Bernard bursts into a maiden lady's fragile drawing-room. At first he appears to have fancied himself for the post of Prince ; but when he saw that his claims were not likely to meet with much support, he constituted himself the champion of the Coburg candidate, Ferdinand "the Fox."

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Ferdinand got his Crown, and John got a little more trouble than he had bargained for. This time Francis Joseph was seriously annoyed. For one of his own House to plunge into a diplomatic embroilment without authority and regardless of Austria's policy and interests was something more than an indiscretion and only a little less than treason. Deciding, probably quite rightly, that John was incorrigible, he deprived him of his command and recalled him to Vienna. Here, according to his niece the Princess Louisa, whose informant was the Archduke himself, he had a very stormy interview with the Emperor. Francis Joseph ordered him to apologise to the Archduke Albert, who apparently was still smarting from that caustic lecture to the Military Club at Cracow. John with some spirit refused.

"Uncle John," stated the Princess Louisa, "said in his bold way that he would leave the Army and the Court rather than be dictated to, and he concluded by declaring that he did not care in the least whether he was a member of the Imperial House. A storm followed this rank apostasy, and my uncle, in a fit of ungovernable rage, tore off his order of the Golden Fleece and flung it at the Emperor."<sup>1</sup>

That, it need hardly be added, was the end of the Archduke John's military career.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Gribble in *The Life of the Emperor Francis Joseph*.

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After this episode he retired to Orth, his mother's *château* on the shores of Lake Gmunden in Switzerland. Here he first gave public indications of his intention to resign his position as a member of the Imperial Family and to go to sea as an ordinary sailor. There was so much gossip about his motives in taking this step that it will be well to examine some of the stories current.

The first of these associated the Archduke's behaviour with the tragedy of Meyerling, which was the subject of so much painful and scandalous speculation. It will be remembered that on a January morning in 1889 the Archduke Rudolph, the only son and heir of Francis Joseph, was found dead in his shooting lodge at Meyerling. His brains had been blown out. In the same room was also found the body of Mary Vetsera,<sup>1</sup> the beautiful Levantine whose intrigue with the young Archduke had lately been the talk of Vienna. She also had been shot through the head. For some weeks this ghastly business was the principal topic of conversation throughout the empire of Francis Joseph, and the futile secrecy attempted by the Court only set tongues wagging more freely. All sorts of rumours obtained currency. It was said that the Archduke had been shot by a gamekeeper; that he had been brained with a chair by the Duke of Braganza; that Mary Vetsera had tried to kill

<sup>1</sup> Marie Larisch calls her "Mary" Vetsera.



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her lover with a razor, and that he had killed her first in self-defence and then himself in despair ; and again—and probably nearer the mark—that the two of them, realising the hopelessness of their love affair, had made what is vulgarly known as a “ death pact.”

There was also another story which went the rounds, connecting the Archduke John with the tragedy and hinting at a political element in the crime. This version was not at first sustained by any evidence other than the fact that John had at one time been a close friend of Rudolph's, and left Vienna under rather mysterious circumstances soon after the Meyerling tragedy ; so that naturally the gossips of the Prater connected the two events. Many years later, however, the Countess Marie Larisch, a favourite niece of the Empress Elizabeth, revived the story in a chapter of her reminiscences, which were published in England in 1913. At this point a word of warning is necessary. The Countess wrote her book with the express purpose of clearing herself of charges which had been brought against her. She had, as she admits, played go-between to Rudolph and Mary Vetsera, and had actually helped Mary to escape from her mother's house to the Hofburg. She is not at all successful in her efforts to justify her conduct, which was rash and foolish in the extreme. But she did her best ; and to that extent her book cannot be regarded as an impartial



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and unprejudiced record of events. This was her story.<sup>1</sup>

At five o'clock one foggy afternoon in January, 1889, the Crown Prince Rudolph came to see her. Without a word of greeting he exclaimed, "Marie, if you don't help me *everything* is lost." He then begged his cousin to bring Mary Vetsera to him in the Hofburg, a commission which the Countess assures us she at first indignantly refused. Rudolph then pleaded that he was in great personal danger. He swore her to silence, and then, looking at her "very strangely," took from under his military cloak a small dark object which he handed to her. It was a steel box sewn up in cloth. At any moment, he said, the Emperor might order his rooms to be searched. Would Marie keep the box in a safe place for him until he fetched it away, or until someone else, whose name he would not disclose, but who would give the password "R.I.U.O.," should come for it? Marie agreed, and Rudolph went on to hint at the fearful perils, political and not merely matrimonial, which threatened him, and to assert that were he to confide in his father the Emperor (as Marie had suggested), he would be signing his own death warrant.

A few days later the Countess committed her final indiscretion of smuggling Mary into the Hofburg, after which she wisely fled to her

<sup>1</sup> Countess Marie Larisch : *My Past*.

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husband at Pardubitz. Meyerling followed, and the Countess, whose share in the tragedy was suspected, fell into deep disgrace. Nevertheless, she came to Vienna for the Crown Prince's funeral, and while she was there a pencilled note was brought to her in her hotel. She read :

“ If you are fearless and still faithful to your word given to the dead, bring what you know of this evening at half-past ten to the public promenade between the Schwarzenberg and the Heugasse. Be silent for the sake of his memory. R.I.U.O.”<sup>1</sup>

The Countess, rash as ever, kept this mysterious assignation, taking the steel box with her. A man in a long cloak and a felt hat, drawn well over his eyes, appeared out of the mist and accosted her. He whispered the magic letters “ R.I.U.O.,” and the Countess thankfully entrusted him with the box. The stranger, however, did not leave her at once. He exchanged a few words with her and then, taking off his hat, disclosed his identity. It was the Archduke John of Tuscany. He became communicative, and laughed when the Countess told him of a visit she had had that afternoon from Count Andrassy. “ You would have done well for yourself,” he said, “ if you had given this box to the Count, for I assure you that instead of being

<sup>1</sup> *My Past.*

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forbidden the Hofburg you would have been made a Duchess. Never mind, things have happened for the best ; you could not save a coward like Rudolph, but you've saved my life."

The Countess wept, and the Archduke took her hand. "Don't regret Rudolph," he said. "If the Emperor had found these papers, matters would have been infinitely worse. The Crown Prince has killed himself, but if the Emperor had known all, it would have been his duty to have had him tried by military law, and shot as a traitor."

"What did he do ?" asked the Countess. "Was he thinking of the Crown of Hungary ?"

The Archduke nodded. But he would not tell the whole story, even if he knew it. He merely hinted that Rudolph, whose constitution had been ruined by drugs and brandy, had failed him in some joint and secret enterprise, in fact had "panicked" at the last moment.

"Good-bye, Countess Marie," he said at length. "You may never see me again, but I shall always remember what you have done for me."

The Countess asked him if he were proposing to leave Austria.

"Yes," he replied, "I'm going to die without dying, for I am tired of the hollow things of life, and I intend to begin a new career."<sup>1</sup>

With these words he left her. He disappeared

<sup>1</sup> *My Past.*

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into the fog, and the Countess never saw him again. Later, remembering what he had told her that evening, she refused to believe in his death, and was positive that one day he would return to Austria.

This account, if true, suggests that Rudolph, abetted by his kinsman the Archduke John, had designs on the Crown of St. Stephen, which the Hungarians had always jealously kept separate from that of Austria. While the Emperor of Austria always became King of Hungary, his kingship was not recognised by good Magyars until he had been properly crowned in Budapest ; and Hungarians were rather fond of pointing out, especially in moments of irritation, that, constitutionally, there was no reason why the two crowns should cover the same head. That Francis Joseph could ever have been dispossessed of Hungary by his son is most improbable. In 1889 Hungary was quiet and contented, Francis Joseph was by no means as unpopular there as people have tried to make out, and his wife, the Empress Elizabeth, was very much liked. Nor does it sound the sort of scheme that would have tempted a *flaneur* like Rudolph, though it is unsafe to take anything for granted with a man who for years has been steadily fuddling his brain with drink and drugs. Rudolph may have regarded the Hungarian plan as a way out of an impossible situation. He would defy his father, divorce his

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unattractive Belgian wife, and share with the beautiful Mary Vetsera the throne of Hungary, where people were not such sticklers for quarterings as they were in Austria.

We must always remember, however, that the story stands or falls by the evidence of the unreliable Countess Marie Larisch ; and even she can only support it by this one conversation with the Archduke John and by a remark of Count Andrassy's to her to the effect that the death of the Crown Prince was " not entirely a love affair."<sup>1</sup>

But let us leave Meyerling and its mysteries. We may wander interminably among its woods without drawing any nearer to a solution of its secrets. After all, even if we believe the Countess, the part played by the Archduke John was not very important ; and we shall find plenty of reasons to account for his later conduct without presuming his implication in a Hungarian plot.

There is no doubt that to a man of John's temperament the restrictions imposed by his birth were particularly galling. An outsider can scarcely realise the relationship that used to exist between a Hapsburg and the head of his House. The Emperor's authority was absolute, not only over the members of his immediate family, but over his uncles, his aunts and his cousins—in short, over all the archdukes and archduchesses of Hapsburg descent. These unfortunate people

<sup>1</sup> *My Past.*





THE ARCHDUKE JOHN SALVATOR  
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were the slaves of their rank. Under penalty of forfeiting their fortunes and their privileges they could neither marry nor take up a profession without the Emperor's consent, and every act of their lives was closely scrutinised, so that the smallest departure from the traditional Hapsburg etiquette might be marked down and condemned. They were not a happy family, and they were not a healthy family. Debarred as they were from marriage with either heretics or non-royal persons, they had for some generations habitually intermarried with their cousins. Nature, as usual, took her revenge ; the stock had become tainted, and in the latter half of the nineteenth century it could probably have shown a longer roll of drunkards, drug-fiends, degenerates, epileptics and lunatics, than any other family in the world. In fact it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that with the Hapsburgs the abnormal had become the rule and the normal the exception. Unhappy indeed was the lot of these exceptions, for their discipline bound them to intimacy with a crowd of relations who, as commoners in a civilised land, would certainly have been clapped into hospitals, asylums or prisons. Now, the Archduke John was a fairly normal man—for a Hapsburg, and we know that he chafed under the autocratic sway of the Emperor. He had been prevented from following his natural bent, and, not unnaturally, the more he felt himself restricted, the more he

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was inclined to magnify his own estimate of his talents.

Above all, he resented the inevitable *mariage de convenance* that loomed before him. As a young lieutenant of hussars he had fallen in love with an English girl whom he met on a steamer while travelling from Port Said to Trieste, and a letter from him to her, which has already appeared in print,<sup>1</sup> gives his point of view.

“Most darlingest of angel girls. I must lavish on you terms of endearment. You are my loveliest love, *mia cara carissima, ma petite chérie*, my own sweet rose of Kent. I thought myself often in love before I had the happiness to meet you, but was mistaken. You fill my soul as nobody else has ever done. I am in despair at being told I must not pay you further attention. My Imperial rank stands in the way, say you and your honoured mother, of courtship *pour le bon motif*. It should, did I not realise the utter vanity of being penned up with a tribe of seventy relatives on an isolated peak. I hate my position, and am determined to live as a man should, and not like a poor creature who must be spoon-fed from the cradle to the grave. It depends on you whether I shall go on as an ‘Arch-duckling’ or not. You spoke of the sad life of Penny Smith. Yes, it was a sad one; but why?

<sup>1</sup> Gribble : *The Life of the Emperor Francis Joseph*.

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The Prince of Capua had not the manliness to go and work for a living for himself and his wife. My courage is equal to emigrating to Australia, where I am sure I should fall on my feet. I could be a manager of a theatre, a teacher of French, German, Italian, or the curator of a zoo or a botanical garden, or I could be a riding-master or a stock-rider. Without going so far as Australia, I might get married in Italy to the girl of my choice. I was born a Tuscan, and the statutes of the grand-ducal family are dead letters there. As you can never be an Archduchess, I shall be only too happy to cease to be an Archduke, but hope ever to be counted your darling Arch-duckling

“JOHANN.

“Or, since you like my soft Italian name, Giovanni—but not on any account (Don) Juan.”

The lady, or perhaps her mother, was not attracted by the prospect held out. An Archduke was one thing; the curator of an Australian zoo was quite another. So the affair came to nothing, and the “Arch-duckling” retained for the moment his inconvenient rank.

More serious and enduring was his passion for Ludmille Hildegarde (Milly) Stübel, an actress from the Viennese opera, whom he first met under rather romantic circumstances while he

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was on a shooting party in the forests of Semmering. The Archduke was then twenty-two, but the attachment thus begun ripened into a love affair which lasted until the day when they both disappeared. Marriage, of course, was impossible, at any rate so long as John remained an Archduke.

Here, without applying further to the Countess Marie Larisch or to the Princess Louisa, we have an abundance of good reasons to explain the Archduke's decision to resign his rank and leave Austria. His military career was over, he had deeply offended the Emperor by his rash conduct, he had always found the restrictions imposed on him by his birth almost insupportably irksome, and he wanted—or said that he wanted—to marry Milly Stübel.

After staying with his mother on Lake Gmunden, the Archduke made a long voyage, which probably confirmed his hankering after the life of a sailor. He had already taken out a master-mariner's certificate at Fiume; he had therefore only to rid himself of his rank and—to find a ship.

His first move on his return was to apply to the Emperor for the necessary permission to resign his titles and privileges, to leave Austria, and to take the name of John Orth. Francis Joseph made it clear that if John persisted in his intention he would meet him more than half way. He would arrange for the Archduke's name to be

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removed from the rolls of the Austrian Upper House and of the Hungarian peerage ; then, for all the Emperor cared, he might call himself what he pleased and go where he liked, provided he never set foot in Austria again. If he did that the police would deal with him. Marshal Czana-dez, a member of the military cabinet, published in the *Berliner-Tageblatt* an account of his final interview with the Archduke.

“ John Orth,” he wrote, “ had hardly left the Empire for Switzerland when the Emperor instructed me to follow him, to deliver a letter to him, and to induce him to return to Vienna. I fulfilled my mission ; but I could not influence the Archduke. He told me that he wished to live on his private means in accordance with his tastes. He said that he had a capital sum of 70,000 florins, and proposed to lay it out to the best advantage. Seeing that he would not listen to my arguments, I took Francis Joseph’s letter from my pocket and handed it to him. He ran his eyes over it and turned pale. Trembling with emotion, he handed the letter back to me and pointed to a passage in which the Emperor told him that his renunciation of the title of Archduke was accepted, but that he must never set foot in Austria-Hungary again. My mission was terminated. I returned to Vienna. I told the Emperor the result, and informed him of the



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details of my conversation with the Archduke. The Emperor made no remark.”

So John made his choice. A little later, he stated his position in a letter to a journalist friend of his in Austria, Herr Heinrich. In this letter, which he obviously intended to be published, he spoke in the most obsequious terms of the Emperor, and accepted, while deploring, the sentence of exile from his native land.

“I have received from the hands of M. Czanadez of the Military Chancellery the letter granting my request; but that letter forbade me to return to my country without special permission. Hard as I find that condition, I recognise that it is not an act of excessive or exaggerated severity. No dynasty can allow one of its members to live the life of a *bourgeois* in his own country without the Emperor’s leave.”<sup>1</sup>

He had, however, one complaint to make. Among other demands the Emperor required his troublesome relative to become a naturalized Swiss subject. But, protested John, he wished to be a sailor, and who had ever heard of a Swiss master-mariner? The conception certainly suggests the mythical horse-marine.

These matters arranged, John went to London, taking Milly Stübel with him. He is said to

<sup>1</sup> Gribble : *The Life of the Emperor Francis Joseph*.

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have married her there, but the registers have been searched without yielding any trace of the ceremony. Next, he bought a ship, a three-master which he named the *Sainte Marguerite* after his mother, and which he manned with a crew drawn mainly from the Fiume Archipelago. He placed a Captain Sodich in command, keeping for himself the berth of chief officer. His purpose was to cross the Atlantic to South America, calling first at the Plate River, and then rounding the Horn to the Pacific Coast. Milly did not sail from Europe with him, but he arranged that she should travel to La Plata by steamer and meet the *Sainte Marguerite* there.

The *Sainte Marguerite* cleared from Chatham on 26th March, 1890. Before sailing John Orth again wrote to his Austrian journalist friend. It was a flowery epistle, probably intended, as were many of his letters, for the eyes of the world.

“To-day I bid farewell to Europe, that quarter of the globe in which the early years of my life have been spent ; and I begin to realise, under the shadow of my old flag, my plan for a voyage to the New World. The tug which is waiting for me will tow my ship out to sea, slowly, silently, without any firing of salutes. So we shall slip down the golden Thames, and in the space of a few hours shall be unfurling our sails amid fog and rain.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faucigny-Lucinge : *L'Archiduc Jean Salvator*.

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The man's egoism had survived his loss of rank.

The *Sainte Marguerite* had an uneventful passage to the Plate River, and was lying off Buenos Aires in June 1890. Here John was joined by Milly Stübel, who was to sail with him on his next voyage. In excellent spirits he again wrote to his Austrian friend.

“Once away from Vienna, I find all peaceful. My loyalty to my fatherland is unshakable. Across the wide waters I waft it a salute.”<sup>1</sup>

Now, at Buenos Aires some trouble seems to have come to a head aboard the *Sainte Marguerite*. On 12th July, just before sailing for Valparaiso, John wrote to his confidential agent :

“My first captain, Sodich, is seriously ill, and must therefore remain behind. One of my officers I wish to put ashore as he is not fit to undertake the voyage; the other I am compelled to discharge. I am thus my own Captain and must make the voyage round Cape Horn to Valparaiso without officers.”

This sounds a little peculiar; and our suspicions increase when we find that in the Plate River a new crew was signed on, in place of the Fiume men whom John had originally shipped. It was said that Captain Sodich's illness—reported to be measles—was a polite excuse;

<sup>1</sup> *L'Archiduc Jean Salvator.*

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that really he had fallen out with his chief officer. It is the kind of trouble we might expect to arise. The Captain was in an invidious position, with a mate who was also his owner, and who probably thought he knew rather more about navigation than was actually the case. At any rate there seems to have been a difference of opinion, in which the Captain and probably the other two officers were involved, and which ended in John Orth resolving to sail without any officers at all.

The folly of this project is apparent when we recall that John had never commanded a ship in his life, that he had just made his first voyage in an executive capacity, that to take a hooker round the Horn is a feat which at any time calls for experienced seamanship, and that the *Sainte Marguerite* would be making the passage at the stormiest time of the year. No wonder her old crew left her in a body ! (We can picture Francis Joseph, when the story was brought to him in the Hofburg, nodding his old head wisely and murmuring, " I told you so.")

So the Archduke John, accompanied by Milly Stübel, started on his last voyage. From the moment that he weighed anchor and dropped down the Plate River he was never seen again. During August of that year fierce gales raged round the Horn, and we must suppose that the *Sainte Marguerite* was wrecked somewhere in that labyrinth of lonely, storm-swept islands which

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cluster round the southernmost point of South America. No one ever appeared to tell the story of that disaster, but, from the information we have, the safe arrival of the ship in Valparaíso would have been the greater miracle.

When the *Sainte Marguerite* became listed as overdue, there was a good deal of speculation about her fate. As the weeks passed, however, and brought no tidings of her, it was generally agreed that she must have foundered or been driven ashore in the neighbourhood of the Horn. The conclusion was almost inevitable. She had only one officer, and he was an inexperienced navigator; and even if he were competent to take his ship through the mountainous seas which would probably be encountered, he was only a man. He must eat and rest and sleep, yet there was no one aboard qualified to relieve him even temporarily of his duties.

There remained the bare possibility that, though the ship had sunk, the crew might have reached the shore and been stranded, just as more than a century earlier the crew of the ill-starred *Wager* had been stranded, on one of the islands off the Tierra del Fuego, where they might easily remain undiscovered and imprisoned for an indefinite period. Out of consideration for John's family, perhaps, or for decency's sake, rather than out of any feeling of affection for John himself, the Emperor sent out an Austrian cruiser to make



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a search. But it was a hopeless task. An entire fleet might have swept those misty, turbulent waters for weeks without finding what they sought—even if it was there for them to find. The search was abandoned, and the general conclusion, with which we can hardly quarrel, was that the *Sainte Marguerite* had gone down with all hands.

Many people, however, refused to accept this verdict. The story filtered back to Europe that John Orth was not dead, that he had never sailed in the *Sainte Marguerite*; or that somehow he had escaped from the shipwreck; that he was living in Spain or in Argentina or in Chile; and that one day he would return.

There were, it is true, circumstances which encouraged these reports. There was Marie Larisch's story of that meeting in the fog, when the Archduke told her that he was "going to die without dying." Then there was John's farewell speech to his nephew and niece, Prince Leopold and Princess Louisa of Tuscany. "I am about to disappear, my dear children," he said, "and I shall do so in such a manner that no one will ever find me. When the Emperor is dead I will return, for then Austria will require my services."<sup>1</sup>

These cryptic assertions, however, need not be taken to imply more than the change of name

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of the Emperor Francis Joseph.*



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from John of Tuscany to John Orth, and of profession from that of Archduke to that of master-mariner. Possibly John underestimated the difficulty with which even a minor royalty can be swallowed up in the crowd.

Undoubtedly people, for one reason or another, were expecting John to disappear. As early as October, 1889, the *Times* correspondent at Vienna reported that the Archduke intended to sink his identity and to emigrate to America, so that the rumours found a readier acceptance than their authority justified.

The reports of John's survival were further encouraged by Camillio Stübel, Milly's brother, who more than a year after the disappearance of the *Sainte Marguerite* published a statement in a New York newspaper that Orth was alive and well in Chile. A little later the same gentleman is alleged to have announced that John had sent instructions to Berlin for his house in the Friedrichstrasse to be got ready for him, as he was coming over to occupy it.<sup>1</sup>

In the track of these rather vague reports a number of more circumstantial stories followed. A visitor to a monastery in Spain claimed to have recognised the Archduke in the habit of a monk. In 1891 it was positively asserted (but afterwards denied) that John had been fighting aboard a Congressional ship in the Chilian revolution of

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*.

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that year.<sup>1</sup> A little later a Trieste man claimed to have seen him in Buenos Aires. Later still a Polar explorer produced a story of a man he had met in Southern latitudes whose pocket-book, which he had seen, bore on it the arms of the Hapsburgs. And in 1899 a traveller in South America brought a story of a lonely ranch on the borders of Chile and Argentina, twenty kilometres from the nearest settlements. It was owned by a German who called himself Friedrich Otten, but whom the traveller was convinced was none other than John Orth.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Gribble gives an interesting account of a gentleman who, accompanied by a well-known solicitor, visited Mr. Eveleigh Nash, the publisher. After throwing out some dark hints of his identity, he confessed that he was the Archduke John of Tuscany.

“I can’t write my life under my own name,” the stranger explained, “but if you want reminiscences of the House of Hapsburg, I can provide you with plenty of them.”<sup>3</sup>

Mr. Nash made further inquiries, and discovered that the man was an impostor who had recently been in Paris, where he had been telling the same tales. Unfortunately for him, Princess Louise of Saxe-Coburg, who had known the late

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*.

<sup>2</sup> *L'Archiduc Jean Salvator*.

<sup>3</sup> *The Life of the Emperor Francis Joseph*.

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Archduke intimately, had been induced to visit a restaurant where his impersonator was dining.

"That man," was her verdict, "is no more John of Tuscany than I am."

Only the other day, in Southampton, yet another candidate appeared by proxy. An enterprising reporter discovered an old Irishwoman, Mrs. Tuffein, living in poor circumstances, who was convinced that her late husband John, who died in 1916, was in reality John Orth. She met him first at Dungarvon, County Waterford. He was a handsome man, "with fine eyes, a black beard, and beautifully shaped ears";<sup>1</sup> and "it was a case of love at first sight." He told her that he was a sailor, lately returned from Buenos Aires. Within twenty-four hours of making her acquaintance he proposed to her, and, though her parents objected to a match with a man who was obviously of higher social standing, she eventually had her way and married him. Her reasons for identifying him with John Orth are not at all conclusive; indeed, he never claimed the honour himself, but merely stated that by rights his sons "would be dukes and occupy great positions in Austria." There was, of course, his distinguished air, and his talk of Gmunden, and of a tragedy in his life, and of letters he was going to write to the Emperor (to whom he habitually alluded as "Joe," a remarkable familiarity even

<sup>1</sup> *Sunday Chronicle*.

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if he were John Orth); and finally there was his death-bed injunction to his wife to write to the Queen of Spain and apprise her of his death. That is all. No dates, which might be helpful, are given; the dead man apparently left behind him no papers or personal possessions which might supply a clue; and a photograph of John Tuffein, taken in his old age, bears no resemblance to the missing Archduke.

In fact, none of these stories leads us anywhere.

Something has been made out of the fact that John's mother, the Princess Marguerite, suddenly gave up wearing mourning, and is supposed later to have sent money to someone who claimed to be her son. That again proves nothing—or perhaps too much. John had means of his own on which he could have drawn, provided he was able to establish his identity, which the Princess's correspondent was not. Moreover, we know that John was devoted to his mother; and whatever view we may have formed of his character, we are scarcely justified in imputing such callousness that he would have allowed her to mourn him as dead for so long, and would then have suddenly come to life again with a demand for cash.

One further point is worth noting. Besides John and Milly there were some twenty-six men aboard the *Sainte Marguerite* when she left Buenos Aires. If, as some of the stories suggest,

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the ship's name and destination were changed, or if she actually rounded the Horn according to plan, someone, sooner or later, would have talked. It is not easy to silence twenty-six tongues, and there would have been rewards for the informer. The fact that to our knowledge not a single man of the crew has ever reappeared is in itself an indication that they perished.

Mr. Gribble describes the death of John Orth as "the second of the major tragedies of Francis Joseph's reign."<sup>1</sup> This is an exaggeration. The affair can hardly be compared with the suicide of Rudolph, the murder of the Empress Elizabeth, or even the execution of Maximilian. Francis Joseph did not care a rush for his relative. He did not care very much for anybody. But though his affections were not lacerated by John Orth's disappearance, his dynastic pride was deeply wounded by the Archduke John's revolt. John's treason to the family tradition was a much bigger matter than his subsequent death.

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of the Emperor Francis Joseph.*

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DAUPHIN*







## THE MYSTERY OF THE DAUPHIN

### I

**I**N the summer of 1789 a child might have been seen playing in the formal gardens of Versailles. He was four years old, a jolly little fellow with long curls and a very ready smile ; overflowing with fun and spirits, old beyond his years, even a little precocious (as children are who spend most of their time in the company of grown-ups), unusually thoughtful for others. That is our first sight of Louis Charles, son of Louis XVI., and Dauphin of France, as he stands on the threshold of his tragic inheritance.

By all the accounts that have come down to us he was a very affectionate child ; to his mother—that unhappiest of queens, Marie Antoinette—he was especially and passionately devoted. Every morning, we are told, he would run out into the big garden to pick a bunch of flowers for her dressing-table. And when the King his father gave him a little garden of his own, he would spend many hours there with his tiny spade and hoe, lavishing on it, as children will, a great deal

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of labour for a very small return ; so that sometimes he was able to take his mother flowers from his own plot.

That summer, in the sunshine and among the roses of Versailles, was a happy time for the child. The shades of the prison-house had not begun to close in on him ; and scarcely an echo of the wild doings in the distant city of Paris, for all the anxiety they brought to the father and mother he loved, had reached the garden where he played.

There came a day in October, however, when the peace of Versailles was rudely broken ; when the clamour of a great crowd broke like the noise of thunder, no longer distant, on the long corridors of the palace ; and alarm and confusion invaded those orderly precincts. The women of Paris—and a good many of the men too—had come to visit their King, and were not to be satisfied until they had seen him.

That night of 5th October must have been a tremendous adventure for the little boy. His father came suddenly into his bedroom, woke him and carried him off down a long underground passage to his own room. In the morning riot blazed up afresh ; some of the mob forced their way into the palace itself ; for a time it seemed that at any moment the riff-raff of the *faubourgs* would burst into the rooms where the Royal Family was anxiously waiting on events ; until at last General Lafayette with his National

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Guards managed to restore some kind of order and to clear the palace of intruders. But the people must see the King, the Queen, even the little Dauphin ; and so the child was taken out on to a balcony and shown to the shouting, surging throng.

That, however, was but an incident in a day of excitements ; for the same afternoon the King and Queen went to Paris, taking their children with them. The carriage in which they drove was engulfed in a sea of people ; bodyguards and National Guards were mingled indiscriminately, and beyond them marched thousands upon thousands of ragged men and women, crying out in triumph that they brought with them “ the Baker, the Bakeress, and the Baker’s Boy.”

It was nearly midnight before the Royal Family reached the empty, long-deserted palace of the Tuileries, where they were to spend the remaining months of their royalty.

For the Dauphin and his sister Elizabeth, the first strangeness of life in their new home must have soon passed away. The boy was beginning to have lessons ; and his hours of play he spent for the most part in a little garden by the side of the river, which was made over to him.

One or two stories are told of him at this time. One day a poor woman who had succeeded in entering his garden asked him to obtain some favour for her. “ Ah, Monseigneur,” she said,

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“if I could obtain it, I should be as happy as a queen !”

“As happy as a queen !” the child answered.  
“I know one who does nothing but cry.”<sup>1</sup>

He still loved to bring flowers to his mother. Once he picked her a bunch containing some marigolds (*soucis* <sup>2</sup>), but as he was about to give her the nosegay he tore them from it, crying, “Ah, Mama, you have got quite enough without these !”<sup>3</sup>

One could wish the authority for these charming little tales were better than it is.

In June 1791 came more excitement: the celebrated attempt to escape to Montmédy, where the loyal outposts were; the rendezvous by night in the Rue de l’Echelle; the drive through the silent streets of the capital; the change into the new *berline*—specially built by Count Fersen for the flight—a huge leathern monster that rocked and crawled at snail’s pace across Northern France; the delays and hitches and tragic errors; and finally discovery when the refugees were within a few hundred yards of safety.

They were taken back to Paris, and this time there was no friendliness in the welcome of the crowds that met them. It was evening when they reached the Tuileries again. Hue, the Dauphin’s own attendant, came to the door of the carriage

<sup>1</sup> Eckard : *Memoirs*.

<sup>2</sup> French for “cares.”

<sup>3</sup> Eckard : *Memoirs*.

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and lifted the little boy out. He carried him off to his room, but, sleepy though the child was, he was eager to tell Hue about the journey. "As soon as we had reached Varennes," he said, "they sent us back again. I don't know why; do you?" And the next morning the boy told Hue that he had had a dreadful nightmare. He had dreamed that he was surrounded by tigers and other savage beasts which were trying to devour him.<sup>1</sup>

Although, after the attempted flight, the Royal Family was more strictly guarded than before, life at the Tuileries went on quietly enough for another year. The Dauphin was kept busy with his lessons, showing himself a quick and apt pupil. In March 1792 he was only seven years old, but his curriculum, which included history, geography, the French classics, arithmetic, geometry, Latin and Italian, might well have dismayed an older child. It suggests an alarming precocity; but the boy was saved by his warm heart and his lively, even mischievous, disposition; nor was Paris in 1792 a breeding-ground for prigs.

On 20th June the city again rose. The mob broke into the Tuileries and invaded the King's apartments. The Queen was in her room with the children at the time. There was a tumult of angry voices outside, and, fearing for her son's safety, she handed him over to Hue, who carried

<sup>1</sup> Eckard : *Memoirs*.



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him to his sister's room near by, and a little later to the King's room, where the rest of the family had gone. The little boy, Hue says, was very frightened and was crying.<sup>1</sup> The crowd, pouring through the palace, at length reached the King's quarters. Forcing their way in they insulted Louis and his wife, compelling the King and the Dauphin to put on the red cap of the Revolution. Some of the men actually cross-examined the boy in order to test his knowledge of history and geography. Five anxious hours passed before the troops arrived and cleared the palace.

On the following day fresh disorders broke out and the Tuileries was again threatened. "Mama, isn't yesterday over yet?" the Dauphin was heard to ask, as the drums beat to arms and the roar of the mob swept up to the windows of the palace.

As the summer wore on the excitement grew. In Paris the Jacobins were fast gaining the upper hand; the Allied monarchs were assembling their forces on the frontier, and in the National Assembly men spoke freely of dethroning their King. On the night of 9th August, pandemonium again broke loose in the streets. There was a fresh onslaught on the Tuileries, headed this time by the men of Marseilles with their song and their bloodstained pikes. The Swiss Guards were at their posts, ready to repel the attack, but Louis

<sup>1</sup>Hue: *Last Years of Louis XVI.*

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was reluctant to allow them to fire on his people. At an early hour in the morning it was decided that the Royal Family should leave the Tuileries and take refuge in the National Assembly. Marie Antoinette herself went to her son's bedside to wake him. "But, Mama," he asked when he was told of the move, "why should they hurt Papa? He is so kind!" Poor Louis was indeed too kind that day; and his Guards, first defending themselves against the crowd, then ordered by the King to cease firing, were butchered like sheep in the corridors and gardens of the palace.

The King and his family had meanwhile gone to the Assembly, the Dauphin "sportfully kicking the fallen leaves,"<sup>1</sup> as he walked between his mother and his governess, Madame de Tourzel. They were taken to a small chamber where they spent sixteen miserable hours, while the Assembly, mob-driven, declared the King's authority suspended and him and his family the hostages of the people.

The next day they were given a temporary lodging in the Couvent des Feuillants. The Tuileries had been pillaged by the mob, and even had it been safe for them to return, they would not have been allowed to do so. On 13th August, escorted by an immense and tumultuous crowd, they were taken to the Temple. It is important to notice that they went there on the orders, not

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle: *The French Revolution*.

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of the Assembly, but of the Commune of Paris, a much more extreme body which was rapidly usurping the functions of government and which had already succeeded in obtaining the charge of the Royal Family.<sup>1</sup>

Their new quarters, as the name implies, were the old home of the Knights Templar. They consisted of the former palace of the Grand Prior—recently occupied by Louis' brother, the Comte d'Artois—and a big square tower crowned with battlements, the ancient donjon of the Order. At the outset there appears to have been a deliberate misunderstanding about the housing of the Royal Family. Louis certainly, the Assembly probably, thought they were to be lodged in the palace; but the Commune intended from the first to confine them in the Tower. The distinction is significant: the first was a palace, the second was without disguise a prison.

On their arrival, however, the Tower was not ready to receive them, and they were taken to the palace, which was thronged with municipal officers. Pétion, who was in charge, then reported to the Commune that the move had been effected, but that, as there had been no time to make the necessary arrangements in the Tower, he had "authorised residence at the palace." The Commune, however, was adamant: the Royal Family must be transferred to the Tower at once.

<sup>1</sup> De Beaucourt : *Captivité et derniers moments de Louis XVI.*

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Adjoining the central keep was a small building known as the Little Tower, where an old archivist, Berthélemy, lived with his records, his books and his collection of old bottles. In order to comply with the Commune's order, Pétion resolved to appropriate this Little Tower as a temporary lodging for the Royal Family, until the larger building had been got ready. So it happened that at a late hour the archivist was startled by the invasion of his home by a crowd of workmen, who seized his furniture, bundled it out of the house, brought it back again, turned the whole place upside down, and ended by driving an exceedingly angry and bewildered old gentleman out into the streets.

Meanwhile in the Temple palace the Royal Family—very tired—were sitting down to a late and lengthy dinner, under the illusion that they had reached their quarters for the night. The little Dauphin was so drowsy that he could scarcely keep his eyes open, and at last Madame de Tourzel took him on her knees, so that he might sleep on undisturbed.

At about eleven o'clock a municipal officer appeared with the news that the prince's room was ready for him, and taking the boy in his arms bore him off so quickly that the governess could scarcely keep up with him. He went down a very long passage, ending in a narrow staircase, up which he climbed with the sleeping child.

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Though Madame de Tourzel was unaware of the fact, he had brought her into the Little Tower, the *annexe* of that Great Tower which was the appointed prison of the Royal Family. To have got the little prince there was good tactics, for where he went his parents would follow.

The Royal Family, consisting of the King, the Queen, his sister Madame Elizabeth, and the two children, were to spend some weeks in the quarters of Berthélemy the archivist. During the first days of their confinement in the Temple the pretence of freedom, and even of royalty, was kept up. Several of their servants were allowed to join them, and as, in their flight from the Tuileries, they had been able to bring nothing with them but the clothes they wore, and the Tuileries had since been thoroughly looted, the Assembly voted a sum of 50,000 livres to defray the expenses of the King's household. The Temple was besieged by tradesmen touting for orders, and furniture, clothes, books and innumerable odds and ends of every sort poured into the Little Tower. Among the accounts we find entries for toys ordered for the Dauphin. "Balloons, a whipping top, a set of ninepins, two pairs of rackets, twelve kites, draughts and dominoes."

Soon, however, the iron band of imprisonment was drawn tighter. The Commune was growing in strength; the people were maddened by the



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menace of foreign invasion ; and all were beset by the fear that the Royal Family would make a second and successful attempt to escape.

First, it was determined to deprive the King and Queen of most of their personal attendants, whose attachment to the royal cause was believed to be dangerous. On the night of 19th August the order arrived, and the valets, ladies-in-waiting and Madame de Tourzel were hurried off to the prison of La Force ; Hue alone was allowed to return to the Temple. The guards were now increased, and eight members of the Commune, chosen by lot, kept watch over the prisoners day and night, never letting them out of their sight. No one was permitted to enter the Temple without a pass, and the hours during which the Royal Family might take exercise in the garden were drastically curtailed. A few days later Hue was again expelled by the Commune, but in the meantime Cléry, the Dauphin's valet, had managed to return ; while, in spite of the efforts to clear out the old staff, quite a number of servants remained who were well-disposed towards the prisoners.

Cléry has given us an account of the daily life of the Dauphin at this time.<sup>1</sup> He was dressed by the valet shortly after six, and the whole family breakfasted together at nine. At ten the King would give him lessons in Latin, history

<sup>1</sup> Cléry's Narrative in *The Sufferings of the Royal Family*.



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and arithmetic, read to him passages from Corneille and Racine, and show him how to draw maps. At one they all went down into the garden, where the boy would play football or quoits or some other game with Cléry.

After their dinner at two, the Dauphin had a short lesson, and, when this was over, was taken to Madame Elizabeth's room, where he played at ball or shuttlecock. In the evening the Queen and Madame Elizabeth took turns to read to the family until eight o'clock, the Dauphin's supper-time. While he was having it the King, to amuse the children, would set them guessing at riddles which he found in the back numbers of a newspaper.

After supper the boy was put to bed, and his mother came in to hear him say his prayers; and while the King was having his meal, which he took at nine, either the Queen or Madame Elizabeth would sit by the child's bedside.

On 25th October the family was moved into the Great Tower of the Temple. This was a square building, about one hundred feet high, containing four lofty storeys each of which had originally consisted of a single room with turrets at the four corners. In order to accommodate the prisoners, on the second and third floors, which were given over to them, partitions had been thrown up and a number of other minor alterations had been made. The first two floors

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were kept for guards and Commissioners on duty, some of whom took an especial delight in slighting their unhappy charges ; and at night a commissioner slept outside the door on each floor. It was a very simple, unassuming life. There were the games and the lessons of the children, the walks in the garden, books and sometimes a little music. And, above all, they had each other. So long as they were together they felt they could support any hardship or danger ; but during those months of imprisonment the fear that haunted them unceasingly was that they might be separated. Especially they dreaded that the Dauphin would be taken from them ; that misery, for the moment, his parents were spared.

We have a few descriptions of the boy about this time. At eight years old he must have been a jolly little figure, all curls and laughter, running about the sad Temple garden in his grey-green coat and trousers and white dimity waistcoat. Hébert, who took his turn on guard, gives two accounts of him. The first was for the benefit of the readers of *Père Duchesne*, a sensational rag for which he wrote.<sup>1</sup>

“ The little monkeys engendered by this harridan (Marie Antoinette) frisk and gambol to amuse those who surround them, but, *foutre !* these hairy fellows will not allow themselves to be made fun of.”

<sup>1</sup> *Père Duchesne*, No. 173.

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In private conversation he told another story.

“ I’ve seen the little child of the Tower,” he is reported to have said. “ He was beautiful as the day, and as interesting as can be. He plays the King marvellously well. I’m fond of playing a game of draughts with him. The day before yesterday he asked me if the people were still unhappy. ‘ That’s a great pity,’ he replied after I had answered in the affirmative.”<sup>1</sup>

The boy took a keen interest in the gaolers, among whom he ran about without the least fear. When one arrived who had shown kindness to the Royal Family, he would hurry off to his mother with the news : “ Mama, to-day it’s Monsieur So-and-so.”<sup>2</sup> Once he saw a Commissioner sitting in the anteroom absorbed in a book he was reading. He crept closer to see what it was and then rushed off to that lover of the classics, his father, whom he told : “ Papa, that gentleman over there is reading Tacitus ! ”

He was very fond of cake. One day the remains of a *brioche* were being taken off the table, when the boy suddenly said :

“ If you like, Mama, I can show you where you can lock up the remains of that *brioche*.”

“ Where ? ” asked the Queen.

<sup>1</sup> Lenôtre : *The Dauphin*.

<sup>2</sup> Cléry’s Narrative in *The sufferings of the Royal Family*.

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“Here,” replied the Dauphin, pointing to his mouth.<sup>1</sup>

To the outward eye they must have seemed an ordinary, rather affectionate, united little family circle, much occupied with each other, with the work and games of the children, with finding such amusement as they might in guessing acrostics, or in walking in the garden.

Yet around them the shadows were deepening.

Sometimes the officers in charge were kind and considerate, sometimes they went out of their way to humiliate the prisoners; to insult and threaten them; to cross-examine them and even to search their rooms; to boast of victories, real or imaginary, gained over the Allied armies; and to devise new and irritating regulations; all of which the King and Queen bore with dignity and patience. On one occasion, it is true, they were stirred from their usual calm, when the head of the Queen’s greatest friend, the Princesse de Lamballe, was paraded before the windows of the Tower on the point of a pike, and exposed to their horrified gaze. More than once the officers came on duty drunk.

After Louis had been deposed and a Republic declared, the insults multiplied; and as the Allies advanced into France the regulations became more vexatious. And over them all the time hung the menace of separation.

<sup>1</sup> Lenôtre : *The Dauphin*.

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On 11th December, while the King was reading with his son, two representatives of the Commune arrived to take him away to his trial. It is said that the Dauphin burst into tears and begged to be allowed to go to "the gentlemen of the Paris sections" to ask pardon for his father. During the trial the King was separated from his family, and they did not see him again until the evening of 20th January, just before his execution. It was a terrible, heart-rending scene. With almost his last words to his son Louis bade him pardon those who were about to kill him. He promised to see his family the next day, but his confessor implored him to spare the Queen the further ordeal, so the promise was not kept.

Shortly after ten o'clock on the following morning the distant cries of the crowd told the unhappy prisoners that the guillotine had done its work. Louis XVI. was dead, and a little boy was King of France.

After the execution of the King a number of plans were formed for the rescue of the survivors of the Royal Family. Unfortunately, they all miscarried, but some inkling of them having slipped out, the Commune redoubled their precautions. "The wall dividing the garden was built up; the platform on the top of the Tower was surrounded with lattice-work, and the air holes were all carefully stopped."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Duchesse d'Angoulême.



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The lack of exercise and fresh air soon began to affect the little boy's health. He complained of a stitch in his side, and on 6th May became really ill, with a violent headache, a high though intermittent temperature and a good deal of pain. For some days the municipal officers ignored the Queen's entreaties that a doctor might be allowed to see the child, but at length Brunier was admitted to the Temple and prescribed the necessary medicine. Although the boy got better quickly under treatment, his sister attributed his later illness and death to this first attack, from which she believed he never fully recovered.

In June the child was again laid up. He had a trifling accident while at play. He was only kept in bed for a short time, but the Commune used the incident as a pretext for bringing the vilest charges against his mother; of these Dr. Pipelet's letter, reproduced by Saint Gervais in *Preuves authentiques de la mort du jeune Louis XVII.*, completely dispose.

Another cruel blow was now impending. In attendance on the prisoners was a Madame Tison, a woman of unbalanced mind, who in a moment of excitement accused the Queen and Madame Elizabeth before the officers of the Commune of carrying on a secret correspondence with persons outside the Temple. Probably there was a grain of truth in her charges; after all that had



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passed the prisoners might have been expected to take any chance that offered of communicating with their friends. Whether the Commune believed Madame Tison's wild allegations or not, they determined to carry out the threat which had so often been made and to separate the little prince from his family. The decree was read to the prisoners on 3rd July. When the boy was told that he was to be taken away he flung himself into his mother's arms and with piteous cries implored the officers to allow him to stay with her. Marie Antoinette herself was completely overcome by the news. At first she passionately refused to let her son go, declaring that she would die before she gave him up. But it was useless. The officers, angered by her resistance, threatened to use force, to call the guard, if necessary to kill both the children.<sup>1</sup> Then she gave way. The boy was in bed when the officers arrived, and his aunt and sister took him and dressed him. When he was ready, the child ran to his mother, sobbing bitterly, and embraced her. Then, with streaming eyes, he was led away.<sup>2</sup>

Marie Antoinette never spoke to her son again.

The boy was now taken to the quarters on the second floor which his father had occupied, and where he was to spend the rest of his short life.

<sup>1</sup> The Duchesse d'Angoulême.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

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For four days, we are told, he cried incessantly for his mother. But the stones of the Temple were not more obdurate than the hearts of his gaolers.

Up to this point the story has been easy to follow. The facts are well authenticated, and apart from other sources we have for our guidance the fairly full narrative written by his sister, a conscientious record of events which she herself had witnessed. But with the separation the cloud of mystery begins to gather round the boy. The records become confused and contradictory, and, in place of one or two witnesses who are able to tell the whole story, we have a multitude of persons, none of whom was in a position to give a full, personal narrative, many of whom are trying—long after the event—to twist the truth to some particular conclusion they are interested in proving, and most of whom confuse what they themselves saw with what they heard from other people.

There is at the outset a clash of evidence concerning the ex-cobbler Simon, into whose care the boy was now committed. The Duchesse d'Angoulême asserts that "his treatment of my brother was more cruel than can possibly be imagined, and the unworthy man redoubled his severity towards the child, because he wept at being separated from us; in fact, he so completely affrighted the mind of my unhappy

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brother that he no longer dared to shed a tear.”<sup>1</sup> This may have been true of the first days of the separation, but the Duchesse, let us remember, is writing not from her own observation but from hearsay, and is therefore no longer so reliable a witness. Certainly Royalist historians—and Hue among them<sup>2</sup>—have represented Simon as a monster of cruelty who savagely ill-treated the boy, beat him frequently, poured jugs of cold water over him, forced him to drink quantities of wine and brandy, dragged him from his bed at night, and on one occasion struck him with his napkin and nearly destroyed the sight of one of his eyes.

There is very little doubt that most of these stories are greatly exaggerated, and that Simon was not so black as he has been painted. He was, of course, a son of the people, quite unfitted to take charge of a delicate child with the upbringing of the Dauphin ; rough, uneducated and probably of drunken habits. A man of very little intelligence, he seems to have been regarded as a butt by his comrades, and to have obtained so responsible and lucrative a position through his connection with Chaumette and other leading Jacobins. Chaumette in particular was his patron, and there is some reason to believe that he regarded the ex-cobbler as a fitting

<sup>1</sup> The Duchesse d'Angoulême.

<sup>2</sup> Hue : *Last Years of Louis XVI.*

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tool for his own purposes, whatever those may have been.

While, therefore, Simon's unsuitability for his new task is undeniable, it is probably untrue that he was guilty of deliberate and cold-blooded cruelty. After the separation the Dauphin was regularly visited by Doctors Pipelet and Thierry, the first of whom was in the confidence of Marie Antoinette, while the second, whose visits continued during the whole of Simon's guardianship, had been consulting physician to the late King. Neither of them makes any mention of ill-treatment, and it is hard to believe that they would have kept silence had one tithe of the allegations against Simon been true; or that, if the Commune were conniving at Simon's malpractices, they would have allowed the visits of two Royalist doctors; or that, if the Commune were ignorant of these malpractices, Simon would have dared to risk certain exposure.

We have some further evidence from the Temple accounts. Here we find that the child's linen was regularly washed, that a little billiard table was fitted up for him, that an aviary was built in one of the turrets so that he might keep pigeons, and that a case of mechanical singing birds, found among some lumber, was repaired for his amusement; while other entries mention a thermometer for his bath, new linen, new suits of clothes, and medicine. We are also told that

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Simon got a dog for the boy, which he named Castor, and “ of which he was very fond.”

All this does not sound like cruelty : rather the reverse. And from more than one source, even if we exclude the statements of Madame Simon, we get the impression, albeit indirectly, that both Simon and his wife became very attached to their small charge and treated him much as they would have treated a child of their own. Simon may have made him fetch his slippers and his hot water, and even have cuffed him in moments of ill-temper ; and perhaps that was nearly all there was to the accusation.

But not quite all. The truth, so far as it can be ascertained, will appear to some almost more horrible than the legend. Simon had been coached in his new duties by his principals, Chaumette and Hébert. “ I will make him lose the idea of his rank,” said the first. “ The little whelp must lose the recollection of his royalty,” declared the second. Simon, of course, was as unqualified to turn a boy into a good citizen as he was to bring him up to be a good king. However, he had his ideas. Like many of the illiterate products of the Revolution, he was full of the catchwords of the day, tags from Rousseau and the *Rights of Man*, and the stock phrases of the Jacobin orators. These he seems to have forced by dint of unwearying repetition into the little boy’s head. On occasions he made him wear



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the red Phrygian cap and the jacket known as a *carmagnole*, affected by the *sansculottes*; he taught him to sing revolutionary songs and, as part of the education of a good democrat, to use obscene and blasphemous language.

“We heard him,” wrote the Duchesse d’Angoulême, “every day singing, in company with Simon, the songs of La Carmagnole, the Marseillais Hymn, and a thousand other horrible compositions of the sort.”<sup>1</sup>

Happily his mother was spared the sight of a degradation which would have tortured her almost more than active cruelty. Scarcely a month after her son had been taken from her it was her turn to die. “Nothing can hurt me now,” she said, as she passed out of the Temple on her way to the prison of the Conciergerie. She faced her trial with the dignity which the world would expect from the daughter of Maria Teresa, and on the 16th of October, 1793, went to her death on the guillotine.

During her trial, however, an episode of almost incredible indecency occurred in the Temple. The Commune resolved to try to procure evidence against the Queen out of the mouths of her own children. With the young Madame Royale they had very little success.

“On descending the staircase, Chaumette addressed some polite phrases to me, to which

<sup>1</sup> The Duchesse d’Angoulême.



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I made no reply. On arriving at my brother's room, I tenderly embraced him; but they tore him from my arms, and told me to pass into the next room. Chaumette there made me sit down, and placed himself on a chair opposite me. One of the municipal officers took the pen, and Chaumette asked me my name. Hébert then began to interrogate me.”<sup>1</sup>

A stream of questions followed, mingled with horrible insinuations against her mother. “Chaumette then examined me respecting a thousand disgusting things, of which my mother and my aunt were accused.”<sup>2</sup> But the girl was firm in her denials: neither from her, nor subsequently from her aunt, could the officers of the Commune obtain anything to suit their ends. In “young Capet,” however, they found a readier tool. Prompted by Simon, the child repeated before his examiners a farrago of obscenities, the meaning of which at his age he could not possibly have understood, and brought charges of conspiracy against several of those who had served his family. To this statement he set a signature so badly formed by comparison with the writing in his exercise books that it has been suggested that the child had been made drunk before his examination. We are told by those present—though the Duchesse does not mention this—that he was then confronted first with his sister

<sup>1</sup> The Duchesse d'Angoulême's narrative.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

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and afterwards with his aunt; that he repeated his disgusting lesson, and in face of their denials persisted that he was telling the truth. What wonder that poor Madame Elizabeth, overcome with horror, exclaimed, "Oh, the monster!"

We must remember that he was only eight and a half years old.

After the death of Marie Antoinette the establishment at the Temple was again overhauled. The expenses were cut down and several of the servants were expelled. Madame Royale and her aunt were kept in close confinement, under lock and key, on the third floor, while the boy remained in the care of Simon on the floor below.

In January, 1794, the Commune passed an order that none of its members should hold any outside office. Simon was accordingly forced to choose between resigning his seat in the Commune—a risky step to take at such a time—and giving up his post of guardian of "young Capet." It has been suggested that Chaumette and Hébert inspired this order for the purpose of getting Simon out of the Temple. That, at any rate, was the result, for on 19th January he and his wife took their departure. In the following July, when Robespierre fell, Simon himself died on the guillotine.

With the disappearance of the Simons the story of the little Dauphin becomes still harder

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to follow. No successor to the shoemaker was appointed, but four members of the Commune, appointed daily, were charged with the safe keeping of the child. With the change the drama enters upon a new and baffling phase. According to such accounts as we have, the boy was now closely confined to his quarters on the second floor; the door communicating with the anteroom was not only kept locked and bolted, but was screwed up and only opened on certain rare occasions; and the necessities of life were passed into the inner room through a lattice window. It is an extraordinary, almost incredible tale. His aunt and his sister, on the floor above, believed for a long time that the boy had left the Tower on 19th January, the day of the Simons' departure, when they heard "a great noise"<sup>1</sup> in the room below. Certainly before that date the boy's voice had been painfully audible, singing and shouting in the company of his mentor; while after that date they never heard another sound from him.

We know, therefore, nothing for certain of the little boy's life during the months that followed. His sister can only repeat what she herself was told afterwards; his aunt was very shortly to die on the scaffold; the Commissioners on duty have left practically no record of their charge; the Temple accounts dwindle to a few com-

<sup>1</sup> The Duchesse d'Angoulême.

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paratively meagre entries. There is a silence which almost suggests a conspiracy.

We do know, however, that the boy was left nearly, if not entirely, unattended; that he lived in a state of neglect and of squalor so horrible that even the Commissioners on duty complained of the stench from his room; and that at length he became seriously ill.

The little more that we know is gleaned from a few special visits paid by officials to the Temple. The first of these that has any significance was that of Robespierre early in May; at least he certainly visited the young princess on that date,<sup>1</sup> and it is most unlikely that he would have left the Temple without also inspecting her brother and his quarters. Why did he go? Was it just curiosity, or had he some other motive? We can only guess, with one grain of fact to aid our conjecture. Lord Grenville's secret agent in Paris wrote to his employer that the object of Robespierre's visit was to arrange for the removal of the little king to Meudon, though he reports later that on 30th May the boy was taken back to the Temple.<sup>2</sup> If this was correct, we merely exchange one mystery for another.

On 27th July came the Revolution of the 9th Thermidor, the fall of Robespierre and the

<sup>1</sup> "He surveyed my person with an air of insolence": the Duchesse d'Angoulême.

<sup>2</sup> Historical Manuscripts Commission: J. F. Fortescue.

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end of the Reign of Terror. On the very next day Barras went to the Temple and ordered the son of Louis XVI. to be shown to him. In his *Mémoires* he wrote an account of his visit, the first authentic record of the boy which we have had for six months.

“I was at the Temple and found the young prince in a cradle-shaped bed in the middle of his room. He was in a sound sleep and woke with difficulty. He was wearing trousers and a grey cloth jacket. I asked him how he was and why he did not sleep in the big bed. He replied, “My knees are swollen and pain me at times when I am standing. The little cradle suits me better.’ I examined his knees and found them very swollen, as well as his ankles and hands. His face was puffed and pale. After asking him if he had what was necessary and having advised him to walk, I gave orders to the Commissioners and scolded them for the neglected state of the room. . . . I ordered that he should be taken for a walk and summoned Monsieur Desault. It is urgent that other doctors should be consulted, that they examine his condition and give him all the care his condition demands. The Committee gave orders in consequence.”<sup>1</sup>

After leaving the Temple Barras appointed a young Creole named Laurent as temporary

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires de Barras.*



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guardian to the two children. Here another mystery deepens. Barras left definite instructions for the better treatment of the Dauphin, which Laurent, his own nominee, appears to have ignored. There was no visit from Desault, no medical consultation, no walk. On the contrary, the boy continued in strict confinement. What is equally puzzling is that Barras gave orders that the brother and sister were to be allowed to meet and to take exercise together. Yet, although Laurent was on quite friendly terms with the princess, he would not allow her to see her brother. Once more, why? The Duchesse, knowing, of course, nothing of Barras' order, and unaware of the magnitude of the Revolution of the 9th Thermidor, supposed that the separation was still to hold good: doubtless she attributed merely to Laurent's conciliatory disposition the better treatment she was getting and the fact that her brother was given a new bed and baths to free him from vermin.

At the end of November a colleague—Gomier—was appointed to share Laurent's duties, and the little boy's condition was further improved. For long he had been denied candle-light, and had suffered from fear in the dark. Gomier allowed him candles. He also took the boy into the outer room and sat with him.

But the child's health grew steadily worse. In December it was reported to the Committee



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of Public Safety that "the prisoner's life was in imminent danger"; and as a result three members were detailed to visit him and discover the true state of affairs. One of these members, Harmand, has left a very full account of his visit, which would carry more weight had it not been written twenty-two years later, after the Restoration of the Bourbons, when he was perhaps over-anxious to create a good impression with the authorities. His memory, too, was unreliable, for he actually dated his visit as in February, 1795, whereas it took place two months earlier. Nevertheless, what he has to say is interesting. The Dauphin's quarters, he reports, were clean, well kept and adequately furnished.

"The prince was seated in front of a little square table covered with playing-cards, some of which had been bent into the shape of little boxes, while others had been used to build card houses. He was busy with these cards when we entered, and he continued to play with them during the whole of our visit. He was dressed in a new slate-coloured sailor suit; his head was bare. The room was clean and well lighted."<sup>1</sup>

The interview which followed was one-sided. Harmand addressed the child, but the latter, while staring at him and apparently listening with the closest attention, answered not a word.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Eckard's *Memoirs*.



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Harmand plied him with questions. Was he well? Was he comfortable? Did he want anything—toys, cakes, a walk in the garden? It was in vain. The boy did what he was told, allowed himself to be examined, but remained obstinately silent. What was the explanation? Royalist writers were convinced that, conscious of the harm his evidence had done to his mother, he had vowed never again to speak to anyone who visited him. Such resolution, however, would be extraordinary in a child of nine; and in fact we know that some months before he had spoken to Barras. Here, then, is another mystery, and on top of it yet another.

Harmand tells us that the boy was in a bad state of health, had tumours on his wrists, elbows and knees, and appeared to be suffering from rickets. Before leaving he gave instructions—so at least he says—that the child should have better and more suitable food, and should be allowed to see his sister. So once more the sequestration order was repealed; but once more, strange to tell, the repeal was ignored. The two children continued to be kept strictly apart.

After Harmand's visit in December there is another interval, lasting until May of the following year (1795), during which, save for a few entries in the accounts, there might almost have been no child imprisoned in the Temple. In May the boy's guardians reported to the Committee of

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Public Safety that he was seriously ill. Desault, a leading Paris surgeon, was then called in to attend on him. His report, if he made one, has never been found. Many stories of a sensational kind became current, and it was said that Desault told the Committee that the child was in a condition so terrible as to be almost incurable, and that he must be sent into the country at once. All we know is that the doctor ordered infusions of hops and massage of the joints with alkali.<sup>1</sup>

Desault paid several visits to the Temple, the last of them on 29th May. On 1st June he died suddenly, and rumour hastened to whisper that he had been poisoned by those who thought he knew too much about the Republic's prisoner. He was succeeded by Doctor Pelletan, who wrote a full account of his visits, but did not write it until 1817 ; so that his story, like Harmand's, must lie under the suspicion of being coloured to suit the times. Certainly he is very anxious to prove his own solicitude for the sick boy, whose condition he declares he recognised at once to be hopeless. That is what he says in 1817 ; but, unfortunately for Pelletan, his prescriptions of 1795 have survived. They order very little medicine, but give detailed instructions for the patient's diet ; and it may be remarked that

<sup>1</sup> A. de Saint Gervais : *Preuves authentiques de la mort du jeune Louis XVII.*

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four substantial meals a day, with plenty of meat, do not sound the kind of fare which an eminent doctor would prescribe for a child who, in his judgment, was lying at death's door. In fact, we are tempted to conclude that Doctor Pelletan's wisdom in 1817 was the wisdom of the doctor who has failed to save his patient's life and is very anxious to show that from the outset his task was impossible.

One reform, at any rate, Doctor Pelletan introduced, in addition to those more palatable meals which the boy was no longer in a state to enjoy. The child was taken downstairs into the little salon which for a time the Queen had occupied and which was the only room in the Tower with a direct view of the garden. In these more cheerful surroundings his spirits revived. He talked freely with the doctor; he played with his little printing plant; he even read in his long-neglected books. But the change had come too late. He grew daily weaker. On the morning of 8th June he was dying. Pelletan arrived with a new colleague, Dumangin, and sought the Committee's permission to bring a nurse into the Temple. Before she could arrive, however, the end had come. Shortly before three o'clock that afternoon the child died in the arms of Lasne, the guardian who had succeeded Laurent.

The proceedings of Lasne and Gomier after the



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boy's death were curious. First of all they took the turnkey, Gourlet, who had chanced to come into the room at the moment of the death, and shut him up in the Tower under lock and key. Gomier then carried the news by letter to the Committee, while Lasne, remaining behind, went on with the day's work exactly as though nothing had happened and the child were still living. Doctor Pelletan arrived at half-past four, and, after being taken in to see the corpse, was treated like the turnkey and made a prisoner.

Meanwhile the Committee had decided not to publish the news until the next day, and gave orders for an autopsy to be held at once. Two men, Damont and Darlot, were introduced into the death-chamber and identified the body as that of the Dauphin, whom they had seen (presumably four years before) walking in the Tuileries gardens; and the surgeons then got to work. By the time they had finished the body was almost unrecognisable; the boy's curls had been shorn off, the scalp stripped of its hair and the head almost covered with a linen bandage. Some of the curls were taken away as a precious souvenir by Damont, and Pelletan surreptitiously removed and concealed the boy's heart.

When the doctors' grisly operations were over, a further identification was arranged; the guard was paraded and filed before the body, which

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they saw by the dim light of a lantern or candle. As was expected of them, they declared the body to be that of the Dauphin, whom they had formerly seen "in the Tuileries gardens and elsewhere."<sup>1</sup> Such a procedure, if the object were really to obtain a proper identification, is hardly comprehensible. Upstairs was the dead boy's sister; although she had not been allowed to see her brother alive, it might be supposed that the veto would have lapsed on his death. Indeed, the barest decency demanded that she should be told the news at once, which she was not, and allowed, if she wished, to view the body, which again she was not.

And there were other witnesses. There was Tison, late servant to the royal household, who had lived with the boy for months and was at the moment imprisoned in the Little Tower almost adjoining the death-chamber. There were Meunier, the head cook, and Baron the door-keeper, both of whom had been in the Temple ever since the coming of the Royal Family, and neither of whom was called in to assist in the identification. It seems as though the Committee preferred to have the evidence only of those who had seen the boy playing in the Tuileries gardens four years earlier.

The Dauphin was buried on the night of 10th June. The body was placed in a little

<sup>1</sup> Lenôtre : *Le Dauphin*.

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coffin of white wood, four and a half feet long, and was carried on a bier, escorted by troops, to the cemetery of Sainte Marguerite. Here, without any ceremony, it was placed in the common grave.

### II

The foregoing may be termed—apart from certain passing comments inevitably suggested—the official version of the Life and Death of Charles-Louis, Dauphin of France, so far as an official version can be said to emerge from the tangle of conflicting evidence, contradictory documents, and statements of interested parties made many years after the events. The story abounds in inconsistencies and in puzzles which never have been, and probably never will be, satisfactorily explained. To this fact we owe the amazing number of conjectures, claims and theories which from time to time have appeared, most of which aim at proving that the boy who died in the Temple on 8th June, 1795, was not the Dauphin at all.

Before, however, we examine some of these, we will deal with one legend which differs from the others in accepting the fact of the Dauphin's death, probably on the given date, but asserts that he was the victim of foul play. The boy, we are told, was poisoned. To this bald statement very little real evidence is attached; against it much may be urged. It is, for example,

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difficult to believe that, if murder had been the Committee's intention, they would have risked allowing the boy to be treated while alive, and examined after death, by surgeons of the undoubted professional reputations of Pelletan and Dumangin, who would have detected poisoning had it been attempted.

Another version of the same story suggests that the Dauphin was actually murdered some time before the date of his supposed death, that he was secretly buried in the grounds of the Temple, and that another boy—the real victim of 8th June—was brought in to take his place. This version rests mainly on the evidence of a certain Comte d'Andigné, who in 1801 was imprisoned for a political offence in the Temple. Some of the prisoners were making gardens for themselves in the grounds, and one of them, digging up some soil, came upon the body of a child which had apparently been buried in quick-lime. Fauconnier, the *concierge* of the Temple, was standing by when the discovery was made, and d'Andigné said to him :

“ Sir, that must be the body of Monseigneur le Dauphin ? ”

To which Fauconnier replied, “ Yes, sir.” <sup>1</sup>

As Fauconnier had only been established in the Temple since May, 1798, there is no reason for regarding his authority as decisive. Neverthe-

<sup>1</sup> d'Andigné : *Mémoires*.

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less, on this slight foundation the story was built up that the real Dauphin had been murdered, presumably during the Terror, and a child in the last stages of rickets, scrofula and consumption substituted for him.

While it would be rash to dismiss as impossible any theory which might account for the mysterious proceedings in the Temple, this story is open to one serious objection. The all-important motive is absent. Alive, the Dauphin may have been a source of embarrassment to the Revolutionary Government, but he was also an asset of great potential value. The tradition of monarchy dies hard ; and we know now that, even in the worst days of the Terror, the possibility of a Restoration was never very long absent from the minds of the leaders of the Commune. Thus we have that surprising report of Lord Grenville's agent in May 1794, which, even if the information about Robespierre were untrue, at least points to a possibility that was in men's minds ; while a few weeks earlier Chaumette and Hébert had actually been guillotined on a charge of attempting to restore the monarchy.

These facts are not so strange as at first sight they may appear. The Republic's frontiers were ringed with enemies. At times it must have seemed that the Revolutionary Government with its ragged levies—ill armed, ill fed and ill led—could not possibly survive against the trained



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armies of Austria and Prussia, the less formidable menace of Spain and the heroic rebels of La Vendée. So, at a desperate crisis in the game, the person of the Dauphin might have been a trump card. By re-establishing (if only temporarily) the monarchy in his favour, and by declaring a regency, the Government might simultaneously have disarmed the Allies of one of their chief motives for invasion, have turned the Royalists into rebels, and have prolonged their own insecure tenure of office. Or, if such a policy were impracticable, they had at least a first-class hostage, through whom they would be able to extract more favourable terms from Austria and Spain, whose Royal Houses were so closely related to the Royal Family of France. The liberation of the Dauphin and his sister was always laid down by the Allies as an essential condition of peace. It was therefore a bargaining point which would have lost much more than half its value with the boy's death.

But there was another consideration which must have influenced the rulers of Paris. So long as the boy lived he was, in the eyes of Europe and of the French Royalists, the rightful King of France ; and from this aspect his youth and the possession of his person were both in favour of the Republican Government. On his death, however, his rights devolved upon his uncle, afterwards Louis XVIII., who, a man and at large



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among the Republic's enemies, was likely to prove a more formidable claimant.

For these reasons alone we are almost justified in ruling out the suggestion of foul play—almost, but not quite ; since in those abnormal days of the Terror the improbable constantly happened and men acted not so much by reason as on the passion of the moment. Yet when we combine the negative evidence with the lack of any positive proof worthy of the name, the case is about as complete as anyone can expect.

While a good many people have believed d'Andigné's story, or some variation of it, many more have lent their support to one or other of the multitude of pretended Dauphins who appeared at different times and places during the first forty years of the nineteenth century. The majority of these pretenders were mere vulgar adventurers, who would descend on some French provincial town, and whisper their secret in the ears of one or two wealthy and credulous old ladies, at whose expense they would spend a few days of idleness and luxury. When the nods and hints of their gratified hostesses had disclosed the royal identity of their guest to their more inquisitive neighbours, the game would end in a midnight flitting or the local gaol.

These, however, were the smaller fry. A more serious claimant than these practitioners in the art of obtaining money by false pretences was

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Naundorff, whose Memoirs were published in England in 1836, under the title of *Extracts from the History of the Misfortunes of the Dauphin*. Just as George IV., in his old age, was convinced that he had been present at the Battle of Waterloo, so Naundorff probably ended with a genuine belief in his identity with the Dauphin. His claims, despite their extravagance, imposed on a great many people, who formed themselves into a party styled the Naundorffistes. His narrative of his escape from the Temple and of his subsequent adventures carries its own refutation, for few more improbable documents have ever been penned. He was, he asserted, taken by "friends" on the eve of Thermidor and hidden on the fourth floor of the Tower. There he remained until 8th June, 1795, when the child who was impersonating him in his old quarters died. For some reason which he does not explain his "friends" removed the dead child from the coffin and substituted the living Naundorff. But all had been carefully arranged. "While driving to the cemetery, I was placed in a box at the bottom of the carriage and the coffin was filled with waste paper."<sup>1</sup> Here Naundorff makes a bad mistake. We know that the body of the Dauphin was taken to the cemetery on a bier, and not in a carriage, so that the feat of juggling

<sup>1</sup> Naundorff: *Extracts from the History of the Misfortunes of the Dauphin*.

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which he describes would have been quite impossible. But the whole story is arrant nonsense ; and his later experiences are on the same level. He suffered from persecution mania and fell into various eccentricities. At one time he became a kind of Swedenborgian and tried to found a church of his own. In 1836 he ventured to assert his royal claims in France, and after a short imprisonment was deported. He spent the rest of his life in England and Holland, where he won a certain reputation as an inventor of mechanical devices. He died suddenly in 1845, still protesting his identity with the Dauphin.

Another of the major claimants was Hervagault, who owed most of his success to his plausible and ingratiating manners. He first appeared in the Department of La Manche during the late autumn of 1796. He was then about fifteen years of age, more than three years older than the Dauphin would have been had he lived. But Hervagault did not at first identify himself with the prisoner of the Temple ; he merely let it be understood that he was of very distinguished birth. At one *château* he hinted that he was the son of the Duc d'Ursel, son-in-law to the King of Portugal ; at another he claimed the Prince of Monaco as his father ; while elsewhere he merely asserted a vague relationship to the French Royal Family. Early in 1797 he was taken up by the magistrates and restored to

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his father, a tailor of Saint Lô. But he soon took to the road again, obtaining free quarters and gifts of money by his ready assumption of such noble names as Montmorency, de Longueville and de Beuzeville. His identity with the Dauphin was actually first suggested to him by some ingenious people at Châlons, and Hervagault, we may be sure, welcomed the idea with enthusiasm. So he continued his career, moving from one Department to another, and not infrequently from one prison to another, leaving behind him everywhere a trail of impoverished dupes and—curiously enough—of faithful adherents. His own account of himself (which contains an interesting episode at Rome, where, he asserted, the Pope branded him with a red hot iron—a purely friendly action to provide proof for the future of his royal parentage) is too foolish to be worthy of attention, and was obviously inspired by a romance entitled *La Cimetière de la Madeleine*, published in 1800, an imaginary narrative of the Dauphin's escape from the Temple.

No more convincing are the claims of Riche-  
mont, as set forth in a series of publications which appeared between 1831 and 1851. This gentleman had also made a close study of *La Cimetière de la Madeleine*, some of the details of which he faithfully reproduced. So much of his account of his later adventures is palpably false that we are not encouraged to accept anything he says.

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La Sicotière believed that his real name was Hébert. He was a drunken, dissolute fellow, wasted a good deal of energy in bickering with the followers of his rival Naundorff, and in the course of his wanderings formed an intimate acquaintance with the interiors of several European prisons.

A pretender who gave a great deal of trouble to the Government was the so-called Charles de Navarre, who made his first appearance at St. Malo in September, 1815, with the story that he had been rescued by the Temple washerwomen and smuggled out in a pile of dirty linen. He was promptly imprisoned at Rouen, where quite a number of distinguished people visited him. Eventually he was identified—not very satisfactorily—with the son of a cobbler, Mathurin Bruneau, though some people believed that he was none other than Hervagault, whose death had been reported five years earlier. Whoever he may have been, his conduct at his trial, which took place in 1818, satisfied most people that he was not the lost prince.

A less formidable pretender was Augustus Meves, a claimant from England. His story is long and, frankly, rather tedious.<sup>1</sup> His “reputed” father lived in Bloomsbury Square, and must have been of an obliging disposition; for,

<sup>1</sup> Meves: *Authentic Historical Memoirs of Louis Charles, Dauphin of France.*



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on learning that his son Augustus bore a striking resemblance to the Dauphin, he took the boy over to Paris, and smuggled him into, and the Dauphin out of, the Temple. Subsequently Mrs. Meves, who perhaps disapproved of the exchange, herself journeyed to Paris and made a second substitution, the victim this time being the deaf and dumb child of a charwoman of St. Martin's called Maria Dodd. All this is a little confusing and mysterious. At any rate Augustus grew up under the impression that he was the son of Meves, and the truth of his royal extraction did not reach him until 1823, when he was thirty-eight years old. He was then acquainted with it by his mother, who, he tells us, "was gradually becoming very feeble from old age." She prefaced the revelation by remarking that the Dauphin, long presumed dead, was in reality alive. Then "she placed her hands upon me, in confirmation of what she said, and looked me full in the face, crying, 'You, Augustus, are that very person.'"<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Meves added that Augustus had a scar on the instep of his left foot which would conclusively prove his identity.

This was enough to persuade Augustus that he was the true Dauphin, and from that moment he began to recall all sorts of forgotten episodes in his royal past. Unlike Naundorff and Herva-

<sup>1</sup> Meves: *Authentic Historical Memoirs of Louis Charles, Dauphin of France.*



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gault, however, Meves did not press his claims or seek unduly to make a profit out of them. When the Duchesse d'Angoulême came over to England, he tried unsuccessfully to obtain an interview with her, but by that time the Princess was shy of false Dauphins. Once, in London, he actually met a rival claimant in the person of Naundorff, but what might have been a piquant and even embarrassing encounter passed off quite amicably, the two pretenders exchanging recollections of the Temple, and their escapes from it, in a couple of conversations.

Even America has produced a false Dauphin. This was Eleazar Williams, a child who was adopted by the Iroquois Indians and who subsequently became a missionary.<sup>1</sup> As a boy he suffered for some years from arrested intelligence, and on his recovery after an accident could recall nothing of his youth. Apart from his alleged facial resemblance to Louis XVI., which undoubtedly suggested the impersonation, he had very little to support his claim; though his biographer has an odd story to tell (on Eleazar's sole authority) of a visit from the Prince de Joinville and of the latter's attempts to persuade Eleazar to sign a paper abdicating his claims in favour of Louis Philippe.

<sup>1</sup> A. de Grasse Stevens : *The Lost Dauphin*.

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## III

From the midst of much uncertainty one fact emerges : whatever was the truth, whether the Dauphin died a natural death, or was poisoned, or was rescued, every one of the many pretenders—it has been reckoned that they numbered about thirty—was an impostor.

What, then, are we to believe ? There are, it appears, three explanations, each of which can show some evidence in its favour, although each is open to serious objection.

In the first place, we may believe that the boy who died in the Temple on 8th June, 1795, was really the Dauphin. This is the line of least resistance ; but if we take it, even when we have ruled out the innumerable and circumstantial stories of substitutions, we are left with a multitude of mysterious facts which no one can properly explain. What was the reason for the sudden change in the Dauphin's treatment after Simon's departure ? Why was he so closely confined ? Why, after Barras's visit, was his seclusion maintained and, despite orders to the contrary, his sister not allowed to see him ? Why, when Harmand saw him in December, 1794, was he apparently dumb, while when Desault visited him six months later, he was able and willing to talk ? What caused the extraordinary negligence of the Convention, domi-

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nated by men of comparatively moderate opinion and humane character, when the child was dying? What was the meaning of those odd proceedings which followed his death, the secrecy, the perfunctory identification, the hasty interment?

Finally, there are two points which have never been cleared up. The first is the attitude of the Royal Family. The Dauphin's sister, the Duchesse d'Angoulême, repeatedly expressed in public her conviction that her brother had died in the Temple. But privately she must have had her doubts; otherwise it is difficult to account for the secret interest she showed in some of the earlier pretenders, the list of questions she tried to put to Charles de Navarre, and her visit to Madame Simon, to which we shall refer later.

The attitude of Louis XVIII. was curious; more, it was ill-advised. On his return to France in 1814, he took steps to honour the memory of his unfortunate brother and the Queen. From these obsequies the Dauphin was excluded. No solemn Mass was celebrated for the repose of his soul, and, though the remains of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette were exhumed in order that they might be reinterred at St. Denis, no attempt at first was made to recover the body of the Dauphin. Again, it will be remembered that at the autopsy Doctor Pelletan removed the boy's heart and Damont cut off his curls. These were carefully preserved. Yet

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neither Louis nor his niece would accept these relics when offered by those who had been keeping them. Since both heart and curls were fully authenticated as belonging to the boy who died in the Temple, the inference was naturally drawn that the Royal Family did not believe that boy to have been their kinsman. People, therefore, can hardly be blamed for thinking that the King was not satisfied that his nephew was dead, and that he was perhaps in possession of vital facts unknown to the world.

The second obstacle to our accepting what we have termed the official story of the Dauphin's death appears when we scrutinise the enquiries which at length took place in 1816, as the sequel to a crop of false Dauphins, and which aimed at recovering and identifying the Dauphin's body. How great this task was likely to prove we can appreciate when we recall that the coffin had been laid in the common grave of the Cemetery of Sainte Marguerite, which was also the burial ground for about a quarter of the population of Paris. However, the Government decided to make the attempt. Voisin, who had been in charge of the funeral arrangements for the Dauphin, was still living, and was able to point out what he alleged to be the site of the grave. He further declared that he had marked the coffin at the top and the bottom with a capital D, traced in charcoal. The grave-digger himself

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was dead, but his widow, Madame Bétrancourt, on being questioned, asserted that her husband had confided to her that on the night following the Dauphin's burial he had removed the coffin and reinterred it "in a grave dug against the foundations of the church under the door of the left transept."<sup>1</sup> This seems clear enough, but once more confusion follows. Further enquiries from others who pretended to special and personal knowledge elicited accounts so contradictory as to leave it completely in doubt whether the Dauphin had been buried in the common grave (as officially he had been), or in the spot indicated by Voisin, or in one of at least two other sites favoured by other witnesses; or, on the other hand, had been transferred (as Madame Bétrancourt affirmed) to another part of Sainte Marguerite, or (according to yet another alleged eye-witness) to a different cemetery altogether. Such was the confusion of evidence that we can understand how it was that on the day fixed for the ceremonial exhumation of the Dauphin's body, when a small army of clergy, acolytes and choirboys was awaiting the signal, an order arrived from the Prefecture cancelling the operations.

Thirty years later, in 1846, the *curé* of Sainte Marguerite on his own initiative dug up the Bétrancourt site. He unearthed a coffin—and

<sup>1</sup> Lenôtre : *Le Dauphin*.



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here again is a discrepancy—of lead, not of wood. Inside it, mingled together, were bones, which when arranged formed a body, the trunk of which might have been that of a boy of about twelve, but the limbs were those of an adult of fifteen to eighteen years old. One point is significant: the brain pan had been sawn in two, a sign that an autopsy had been performed. Those who saw the remains were positive that they could not be those of a boy of less than fifteen, and this conclusion was confirmed when, forty-six years later, in 1892, a fresh exhumation took place and the bones were subjected to a close examination by specialists. It is, of course, possible that Bétrancourt removed the wrong coffin; if so, we are confronted with the extraordinary coincidence of two boys, both buried about the same time and in the same place, on both of whom an autopsy had been performed.

Let us now recapitulate the official story. The Dauphin was taken from his mother and handed over to Simon, who must be charged, not perhaps with deliberate neglect, but at least with undermining the boy's character and physical health. On Simon's departure the treatment was changed. The boy was shut up in a room by himself; he never came out; he saw and spoke to nobody; he was denied candle-light after dark; his meals were handed in through a lattice as though he were a dangerous criminal;



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neither his room nor his person was ever cleaned ; and in this state of isolation, neglect and squalor he lived for six months. At the end of that period, as might be expected of a child of his age in such circumstances, he had become, mentally and physically, so changed as to be almost unrecognisable ; he was riddled with disease, had grown abnormally, was practically an imbecile and, when Harmand visited him, had apparently lost the use of his tongue. With kinder treatment he recovered his faculties a little, but physically the mischief was too serious to be repaired ; and the change in him was such that decency forbade the authorised reunion of brother and sister. He died in the Temple on 8th June, 1795, and was buried in the Cemetery of Sainte Marguerite.

That is the first solution which, if we please, we may accept. There remain two other explanations, both of which involve the introduction of a strange child into the Temple and his substitution for the Dauphin.

There is plenty of evidence of varying value in support of this "substitution" theory. In the first place, we have the very definite and interesting statements of Madame Simon, which, if we could rely upon them, would establish part of the truth beyond question. After her husband had been guillotined, Madame Simon fell upon evil days, and in 1796 was admitted into a hospital for incurables. Since the establishment of the

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Commune this hospital had been under lay management, but in 1810 the sisters of St. Vincent of Paul were reinstated. So long as the republican *régime* lasted, Madame Simon kept very quiet; but with the return of the nuns, the change in public sentiment, and the appearance, perhaps, in the hospital of some feeling against the widow of the notorious cobbler, she began to talk. She insisted that the charges of ill-treatment against her and her husband were false; that, on the contrary, they had been sincerely attached to the little boy in their charge, and that they had, at considerable risk to themselves, actually contrived his escape from the Temple. To this last assertion she added details which in the course of constant repetition did not vary unduly. She said that just before she and Simon left the Temple, they had brought in a strange child concealed in a large pasteboard horse, and had then smuggled out the young prince in a bundle of dirty linen. She did not know what had been the subsequent fate of the Dauphin, but on one occasion she claimed to have seen him again in 1802.

These statements the woman repeated not once but many times, in the presence of nuns and priests and of a Doctor Rémusat, all of whom believed that she was speaking the truth. So long as Napoleon ruled France the inmates of the hospital kept the story to themselves, but

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after the Restoration it leaked out and caused a sensation in Paris, which many tried to discount by asserting that the woman's brain was affected, or that these were the ravings of a confirmed alcoholic. Those, however, who had charge of her and were presumably in a position to know, stoutly denied these suggestions, persisting that Madame Simon had always shown herself a kindly, sensible and sober old woman. (Certainly she was acute enough to recognise the Duchesse d'Angoulême when the latter paid her a visit incognito in 1814.)

So much attention did Madame Simon begin to attract that at length the police took the matter up. Unfortunately, they started with the conviction that the whole story was a fabrication, and conducted their examination accordingly. They scolded and bullied the poor old woman into a panic. She wept, she contradicted herself, she retracted, and at length she signed a document disavowing her disclosures. But when she was back in the hospital and had recovered from her fright she returned to her former tale. She died in 1819, assuring the priest at her bedside with her last words that the story she had told was the truth.

We may connect Madame Simon's evidence with the fall of Simon's patron Chaumette in March, 1794, on a charge of attempting to restore the monarchy, for if he really had such a plan

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in his head, his first step might well have been to secure the person of the Dauphin in some spot more convenient for his purpose than the Temple.

This theory fits in with some of the other evidence. There were, for example, those reports of Lord Grenville's spy, an unusually well-informed person, first that Robespierre was about to remove the Dauphin from his prison, and later that he had taken him from the Temple, but had brought him back again. Why did he suddenly change his plans? Because, it may be answered, in the interval he had discovered that he had, vulgarly speaking, been "sold a pup," and that the child he had found in the Temple was not the Dauphin.

Then there was Harmand's visit and interview with a child who was apparently dumb. His impression may have been correct. Chaumette may have taken the precaution of procuring a substitute who was physically incapable of betraying his true identity. But, it is urged, at a later date the child spoke to Barras, to Desault, to Laurent and others. Some have accounted for this by supposing a second substitution. The dumb child is taken out and a third child is brought in. This sounds very far-fetched, but again there is evidence of a kind in its favour. There is the mysterious episode of Petitval, the honest banker who had had business relations with the Royal Family, who helped to finance

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the Revolution of Thermidor, and who, in return, is said to have obtained from Barras a promise that the Dauphin would be allowed secretly to leave the Temple in order to stay with the banker at his *château* of Vitry, where he was to remain at the disposal of the Convention. All this we have on the authority of Barras himself and those of his colleagues whom he told of his undertaking, and who discussed the abduction of the Dauphin at a secret session of the Directory as though it had already been carried out.<sup>1</sup> In Petitval, a man of high reputation, we might expect to find a valuable witness ; but once more, scarcely have we set our feet upon what appears to be the broad highway than it turns into a blind alley. On the night of 21st April, 1796, a band of ruffians broke into the banker's *château* and brutally murdered all the inmates, with the exception of some of the servants and Petitval's little boy, who got away. As nothing was stolen from the *château* the motive for this outrage is a mystery. We learn, however, that at a secret meeting of the Directory a few days later the crime was discussed, and it was hinted pretty freely that the banker had offended certain powerful persons by threatening to expose them. In other words, he knew too much. On these facts Lenôtre <sup>2</sup> constructs an ingenious hypothesis.

<sup>1</sup> For the full story, see Lenôtre : *Le Dauphin*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



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Barras, he suggests, delivered to Petitval the child whom he found in the Temple, but the banker at once discovered that the boy was not the Dauphin. At first he was persuaded to hold his tongue; but when the substituted child died in June, 1795, and was buried as the Dauphin, he became restless and at length threatened to make disclosures which might have proved exceedingly embarrassing. So he was effectively silenced. Lenôtre apparently does not envisage the possibility that Petitval was actually given the genuine Dauphin, or that he thought he had been given the genuine Dauphin; which would have accounted even more completely for the banker's impatience after the death of the substituted child on 8th June, and also for the Directory's desire to dispose not merely of an embarrassing witness, but also of his household. The fate of the boy whom Barras sent to Vitry is an important point. We know nothing about it. We do not even know that there ever was a boy at Vitry. At that second secret meeting of the Directory, however, Barras reported that "the lady's maid who looked after the child you know had her head cut off." Possibly the boy shared the fate of the rest of Petitval's family and was murdered. Or perhaps the banker, when he discovered that he had been duped, merely sent the child away. The whole episode only provides an additional complication.



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The hypothesis we are trying to follow, however, explains a good deal. Let us assume that the real Dauphin left the Temple with Simon. We can then understand the purpose that prompted the rigorous confinement of his substitute ; the care that was taken, then and later, to prevent a meeting between Madame Royale and her "brother" ; Robespierre's actions as reported by Lord Grenville's agent ; the secrecy which, for no apparent reason, was retained after the Revolution of Thermidor, and which surrounded the death and burial of the boy on 10th June ; and many other minor points which the reader of this intricate and puzzling narrative may be grateful for being spared. The truth, on this assumption, would then be that first Robespierre and then Barras discovered the deception, and that neither could afford to let his enemies, within France and beyond the frontiers, know that he no longer held the person of the rightful King of France. For that shattering revelation they waited—like the opportunists they were—until the true Dauphin should appear, when perhaps they hoped to brazen it out by denouncing him as an impostor. And here is the rock on which the whole theory well-nigh founders : the true Dauphin never did appear. Yet it seems almost inconceivable that if he really escaped from the Temple he should have vanished altogether. Surely his deliverance

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would have been acclaimed with shouts of joy by the relatives, friends and adherents of the Royal House of France. In England, in Spain, in Austria, in the Vendée he would have been equally welcome; and at that time, when so many were alive who had seen him but three years earlier, identification, even if formally necessary, would have been no great matter. Surely, too, some of those who were concerned in his escape would have hastened to claim the credit and perhaps the reward. Would not Madame Simon, for example, in her poverty have sought to mend her fortunes by quietly drawing the attention of the Royalists to the part she had played?

This is precisely where all the pretenders came to grief. To get out of their difficulty some of them pleaded loss of memory; yet it is marvellous how in sympathetic surroundings their powers of recollection expanded. Others threw out dark hints of the danger of revealing prematurely their identity; of plots and persecutions and attempted assassinations, which bear the hall-mark of invention. For, once escaped from France, whom need the Dauphin have feared? Even if the Comte de Provence was unlikely to welcome his lost nephew, he was not the man to compass his death; and if he had been, for one enemy the son of Louis XVI. would have found a hundred friends.

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That is the great objection to the "substitution" theories; but there is an answer to it which just passes muster. Chaumette may have hidden his prize too well. Possibly only he and the Simons were in the secret, and even the Simons might not have known where the boy was taken; indeed, Madame Simon said as much. Soon afterwards Chaumette himself and his colleague Hébert died on the guillotine, and in the holocaust of the worst days of the Terror which followed and which in the end was to engulf Simon as well, the secret may have been lost for ever. The Dauphin, entrusted perhaps to the care of some humble folk, unaware of his identity, was only a child. His memory was short; the horrors he had seen in his brief life were enough to derange the boy's mind; he had been for six months the pupil of a man whose object had been to make a "good citizen" of him, who had striven—all too successfully—to efface his early upbringing, to blot out his royal origin. May he not have forgotten, or only remembered as the shadow of a dream, his past and his parentage? Or, since he was a delicate child, he may not have long survived his abduction from the Temple; he may have died, nameless and unknown, in some dark corner of the great city of Paris. These are bare possibilities which it is only fair to mention.

Finally, there is the third theory, which also involves a substitution, but necessitates jettison-

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ing the evidence of Madame Simon. We may believe that the real Dauphin died in the Temple, just before or just after Simon's departure. Robespierre, when confronted with this fact, was in a quandary. If the boy's death were published his uncle became at once the undisputed successor to his rights, and his activities on the eastern frontier would be invested with so much more authority; at the same time, a hostage of great value would be lost. So, it is suggested, he decided to conceal the truth, and since, if there were no child in the Temple, the fact could scarcely be kept from the guards, a substitute was brought in. So d'Andigné's story of the body found in the moat may be a genuine clue after all, for the real Dauphin may well have been buried in the precincts of the Temple.

As we thread the labyrinth of this terrible story, we may well despair of ever reaching the truth. Against every theory that can be put forward the weight of evidence is crushing; and we end our enquiry, as we began it, oppressed by a sense of mystery which provokes even more than it attracts us. It is as though some malevolent genius had been at work, destroying the facts, sending us on false scents, obliterating the trail; yet leaving us always just a fragment of hope that somehow, at some time, the true story will emerge from that welter of lies, forgeries and impostures.

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But that hope will surely never be realised now. Could the stones of the Temple, razed long ago to the ground, have told us the secret ? Or must we seek it from a little, tragic ghost playing under the whispering trees of the great garden of Versailles ?

*THE EMPEROR AND THE  
HERMIT*







## THE EMPEROR AND THE HERMIT

### I

**T**HERE are some persons who draw mystery to themselves as a magnet attracts steel. Why this should be it is difficult to say. There is no obvious common denominator; the mystery seems to pursue men and women of the most diverse qualities, careers and achievements, following them from the cradle to the grave, and even beyond the grave. Nor can we confine this peculiarity to any particular age or country as being more credulous than any other; all countries and all ages have produced their "mystery men," enigmas to their contemporaries, legends to their posterity. The legends, too, endure. Men will argue to-day, as hotly as ever their forbears argued, about the Emperor Frederick II., or about Mary Queen of Scots. The ages pass, but the controversies continue.

Probably there have been few greater "mystery men"—at any rate in the eyes of contemporaries—than Alexander I., Emperor of Russia. To the Europe of his day he was the Sphinx of the

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North, brooding darkly over his mighty empire. None could fathom the processes of that remote mind, or foresee what action, what policy, what wars, what alliances were forming within it. To-day it was Friedland, to-morrow Tilsit, the day after the snows and slaughter of 1812. To-day the Liberals might rejoice at some mark of favour, forgetting that yesterday their patron was the creator of the Holy Alliance, unsuspecting that to-morrow Russian arms and Russian diplomacy would be busy stamping out the Nationalist movement. We may not wonder that Europe was bewildered and that its statesmen sometimes despaired, for of Alexander one thing and one thing only could be confidently predicted : that whatever he might be about to do would certainly be unexpected, and would probably be inconsistent with what he was actually doing.

So we might almost expect to find a mystery—or at any rate a mystification—following him into the grave. That Alexander I. died on 1st December, 1825, at Taganrog in the Crimea, and was buried in March, 1826, in the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul at St. Petersburg, are facts about as well authenticated as any facts can be ; yet almost from the day of his death there were those who whispered and questioned, and with the passage of years the numbers of the doubters have multiplied rather than diminished. Finally,

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for their encouragement, the real Alexander was discovered and identified. He was a hermit living in a remote Siberian village ; and, although the discovery was not published until after the hermit's death, when verification was necessarily difficult, the story was eagerly seized upon. To-day it is widely believed, both in Russia and outside it, that the Emperor Alexander and a certain hermit of Tomsk were one and the same person.

The legend, of course, is familiar. Similar stories were current of the Emperor Barbarossa, of Sebastian of Portugal, of Louis XVII., and, in our own time, of Lord Kitchener. They arise, generally, on a death so inopportune as to seem a perversion of Fate's intention, something which should not have happened, and which therefore could not have happened. Usually, too, the tragedy is unexpected, and so almost incredible ; and why should the incredible be accepted ? So the rumours start, and in course of time gain a ready hearing from those who prefer fiction when it is more picturesque than the truth and will never take as final any evidence that may shatter a cherished delusion.

This legend of Alexander is particularly interesting, because he was really an interesting man. Few monarchs—our own Henry VIII. was of the number—have roused and disappointed such high hopes. When Alexander succeeded his

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mad father, the Emperor Paul, in whose murder—justifiable as it may have been—he was almost certainly an accomplice, Europe was in the midst of the Napoleonic struggle. The Coalition, heavily outmatched in the field, turned to acclaim a new champion. Great expectations sprang from the hope of Alexander's intervention, and it was believed, even as in 1914, that the "Russian steamroller" would force an early and favourable decision to the war.

So Alexander appears in his earliest rôle, a kind of Apocalyptic figure, emerging from the north to save Christendom and to destroy Anti-Christ. The belief survived the catastrophe of Austerlitz, where Austria was the principal combatant, the bloody and doubtful battle of Eylau, and even the disaster of Friedland. But the strange meeting with Napoleon on the bridge at Tilsit saw the first of those transformations which were to startle and bewilder the statesmen of the day. The Apocalyptic figure faded, as Alexander and Anti-Christ laid their plans for the partition of the civilised world. What was projected was a kind of resuscitation of the divided Roman Empire, Napoleon ruling the west from Paris, and Alexander the east from St. Petersburg. The scheme, of course, did not last: Alexander's schemes seldom did. There was no room in Europe for two Napoleons—or even for two Alexanders. On the one side there was contempt,

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on the other extreme sensitiveness. Napoleon did not always conceal his feelings towards his resplendent colleague. He could not curb his tongue, even in Alexander's presence, and Alexander, not very sure of himself, over-ready, perhaps, to suspect an innuendo where none was intended, quickly showed his resentment. "Your Majesty," Napoleon remarked, as early as the Tilsit meeting, "is the handsomest man I have ever seen." To which Alexander replied by expressing his regret that he was unable to say, "*Que votre majesté soit le plus grand homme que j'aie vu*"—a palpable hit in a tender place, but not a promising augury for future relations.

So, in the end, a mixture of motives, in which jealousy, vanity and the glitter of Lord Castle-reagh's guineas all played a part, recalled Alexander to his earlier rôle of liberator of Europe. He turned his coat again and lured Napoleon and the Grand Army into the wilds of Russia for chastisement. In 1812, for the first and perhaps the last time, Alexander played a part at once heroic and effective. Napoleon thought that he knew his man; that his vanity would tempt him to risk a pitched battle or two in Poland; and that after a few reverses his inconstancy would lead him to abandon the struggle. But it was impossible to rely even upon Alexander's weaknesses. He refused to play the part designed for him. He would neither fight nor negotiate. As Napoleon



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perforce advanced, he retreated. Day by day the Grand Army plunged deeper into the heart of Russia, yet the expected envoys never appeared, nor could the retiring Russians be brought to an action. One battle, it is true, Alexander insisted upon, for the defence of the ancient capital ; and the defeat of Borodino must have convinced him that his earlier policy was the wiser. But neither Borodino nor the fall of Moscow weakened his resolution to make no terms with Napoleon so long as a single French soldier stood upon Russian soil. He had his reward when " General January and General February " came to his aid, and the starving frost-bitten remnants of the greatest army the world had yet seen straggled miserably home.

For a while it seemed as though Alexander would justify his early reputation, for when Napoleon turned his back upon the flames of Moscow he was setting out upon the road to St. Helena. But the Congress of Vienna and the ensuing years of peace brought disillusionment. Alexander was not a bad man. He was not conscious of duplicity in his dealings with other nations. Yet he had certain fatal weaknesses. He was vain ; he could not endure unpopularity ; he must always play a part, and it must be a noble part. He was unnaturally sensitive to the opinions of those about him, so that an hour's conversation would sometimes launch him on a

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completely new policy. His own views were nebulous. In his youth he had imbibed from his tutor Laharpe some copious draughts of philosophic Liberalism, and he never quite forgot these early potations. On the other hand, his immediate environment was anything but Liberal in sentiment, and whenever he remembered that he was a Liberal by conviction, there was always someone at hand to remind him that he was the Autocrat of All the Russias by birth. The two characters did not and could not mix; which accounts for the fact that when Alexander embarked on some particularly enlightened project, such as the Holy Alliance, the project generally ended in blank reaction.

His contemporaries were perhaps harsh in their judgments upon him. To Napoleon he was "a play actor," "a shifty Byzantine." Metternich called him "a dangerous madman." Even Castlereagh declared, "Either he is sincere, or hypocrisy certainly assumes a more abominable garb than she was yet clothed in."

In 1816 his vagaries reached their climax with the appointment of two foreign ministers, Nesselrode and Capo d'Istria, the one a frank reactionary and the other a confirmed Liberal, who pursued completely contradictory policies with the impartial approval of their master. At length the revolutionary troubles of 1819 and 1820, culminating in the mutiny of Alexander's most trusted

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regiment, the Semyonovski Guards, swung him to the right. But his zest for the game of government was gone ; during the last three years of his reign he practically handed over the administration of his empire to Count Arakcheyev, a bureaucrat whose ruthless methods effectually quenched the last hopes of the constitutionalists.

Alexander's amazing changefulness dominated his private as well as his public life. He alternated between profligacy and mysticism, and hovered uncertainly between his mistresses and his Bible. One of the oddest episodes in his career was his association with the Baroness de Krüdener, the famous evangelist, who succeeded in obtaining an interview with him in 1815, when, in one of his "man from the north" moods, he was brooding over an open Bible in a room at Heilbronn. The interview, ending in the conversion of a weeping Emperor, had important results, for from it in some measure emerged the scheme of the Holy Alliance, which was designed to bind the sovereigns of Europe together in a Christian pact, but which, had it ever become effective, would in fact have bound their peoples in a most un-Christian subjection.

It is at once Alexander's tragedy and his triumph that though, apart from the overthrow of Napoleon, he succeeded in scarcely one of the high objects to which he set his hand, his reign left definite and enduring marks upon the world.

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When he died Russia still lacked any form of constitution, and the majority of his subjects remained serfs ; his codification of the Civil Law had proved a hopeless fiasco ; the revolutionary movement which, when he came to the throne, had scarcely appeared in Russia, had obtained a firm foothold throughout the Empire ; Poland and Finland had to wait nearly a hundred years for the liberation he had promised them ; and Europe lingered on in a disunion which was to culminate in the Great War.

These were his failures. His achievements, though unintentional, were quite as important. As Professor Alison Phillips <sup>1</sup> has pointed out, the Holy Alliance, passing through the famous rescript of Nicholas II., is the discredited ancestor of the League of Nations ; while Alexander's attempt to extend the alliance to America provoked the United States to formulate the Monroe Doctrine, a most significant historical document. The awakening of national consciousness which accompanied and was aroused by the French invasion of 1812 was the precursor of the great Slav movements in the following century ; and the system of government, arbitrary yet corrupt, which Alexander in his later years was driven to adopt, determined the form of that bureaucracy which brought forth and was destroyed by the Bolshevik Revolution.

<sup>1</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, February, 1926.

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These, however, were results both unforeseen and unintended. Alexander died a disappointed man. His schemes had all gone wrong, and during the last few years of his life he scarcely interfered in the administration, contenting himself with a series of lengthy and exhausting journeys of inspection into the remote parts of his vast empire.

### II

The circumstances of his death have been carefully recorded. In November, 1825, while he was travelling in the Crimea, he had a feverish attack which compelled him to return to his headquarters at Taganrog, on the Sea of Azov, where his wife, the Empress Elizabeth, was staying. His constitution was so vigorous that at first no anxiety for his health was felt. For a fortnight he refused to take medicine or to pay any attention to the advice of his doctors. The precise nature of his complaint is uncertain : it has been suggested that it was typhus. His condition grew swiftly worse, and when at length the doctors were called in, it was too late for them to save him, if indeed that had ever been possible.

Just before the end he rallied, and the good news was sent post haste to the capital ; but at the very moment when the church bells were ringing and Te Deums of thanksgiving were being sung, a second courier arrived with the news that Alexander was dead.





ALEXANDER I., EMPEROR OF RUSSIA

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During the last five days and nights of his illness his wife never left his bedside. She was heartbroken at his death. "Our angel is gone to heaven," she wrote to the Empress Marie, a remark which shows that she had forgotten or forgiven a great many years of habitual infidelity.

The death was perfectly well attested. The physician in attendance on the Emperor was Sir James Wyllie, who with eight other medical men signed the *procès verbal* of the autopsy; while Doctor Robert Lee, an independent English witness who happened to be travelling in the Crimea at the time, though he was not allowed to examine the body, was given by Sir James a full account of the circumstances of the Emperor's death, and was admitted to the room where the body lay.<sup>1</sup> All this seems very clear and conclusive. We have the presence of the Empress, her letter to her mother-in-law, and the testimony of Sir James Wyllie, of eight other medical officers and of one independent doctor. It can be understood that the stories which began so soon to circulate did not emanate from Taganrog, or receive any encouragement from those who were in the best position to know the truth.

Nevertheless, the baffling personality of Alexander and the circumstances surrounding his death—its unexpectedness, the remoteness of Taganrog, that early and over-sanguine report of

<sup>1</sup> Lee : *The Last Days of the Emperor Alexander.*

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his recovery—created an atmosphere favourable to mystery ; while the unusual spectacle of a Romanoff dying in his bed possibly predisposed the public mind to suspect some other and more likely explanation. Long before Alexander had been laid in his tomb in the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul rumour had begun to be busy.

Incidentally, one of the more persistent legends later current about him was concerned not with his survival, but with his alleged death-bed conversion to Roman Catholicism. Briefly, the tale ran that the Emperor, shortly before his death, sent a certain Count Michael de Beauretour to Rome, to ask for the despatch to Russia of a representative to receive on behalf of the Pope the submission of the Tsar and his subjects ; that de Beauretour actually had an interview with Leo XII., to whom he knelt and tendered his master's recognition of the Papal claims ; and that only Alexander's death prevented the execution—or at least the attempted execution—of the plan.

The authority for this fable is very thin ; there is no record of de Beauretour's mission in the archives either of the Vatican or of the Russian Legation in Rome ; the evidence for it is mainly hearsay, and nearly fifty years elapsed before the story emerged at all ; while it may be added that its chief protagonist was a Father Pierling, a prominent member of the Society of Jesus, who

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was engaged at the time in Roman Catholic propaganda in Russia, and cannot therefore be regarded as wholly disinterested.

Alexander, of course, was as much addicted to religious as to political moods. He probably regarded Christian reunion, much as he regarded a League of Nations to ensure peace, as a desirable ideal; he investigated and admitted the good that was in other faiths outside the Orthodox Church; and the Bible, as we know, was his constant companion. But it is about as reasonable to construct a story of his conversion to Rome on the strength of a few sympathetic remarks, as it would be to suppose his conversion to Quakerism because he once showed a passing interest in the teaching and personality of Mr. Allen.

When we return to Taganrog we find very little support for the story. Had Alexander really been recently converted to the Roman persuasion, it is almost certain that when *in articulo mortis* he would, like our own Charles II., have professed his change of faith. But he did nothing of the kind. In his last moments of consciousness he made his confession to and received the Sacrament from a priest of the Russian Church.

The conversion legend is no great matter. It is palpably false, and has never been very widely believed. The survival legend, on the other hand, which appeared a good deal earlier, is

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worthier of serious attention. It is curious to find its growth encouraged, all unconsciously, by those who must have disliked it most particularly. In the first place, the Empress Elizabeth was very reluctant to allow anyone to see her dead husband. Her feeling was quite natural. Within a few hours of death the face of the corpse had turned nearly black. "He who was so careful of his person," she said, "would not have liked to be looked upon when he had become so changed." She was even displeased with Sir James Wyllie for allowing her express orders to be infringed and the body to be examined for the purpose of the autopsy. Nevertheless, the harm was done, and the story began to go the rounds that for some reason or other the body of the late Emperor might not be viewed.

Then there was a long and—to the uninitiated—inexplicable delay in bringing the body north to its final resting-place in the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul. For this, again, there were valid reasons. Alexander in a secret will had passed over the next heir, Constantine, and had bequeathed his empire to Nicholas. The decision, however, was not accepted without question. Constantine seems to have behaved quite correctly, but there were plenty of people about who were only waiting for a chance to make mischief, and in fact the succession did not pass without serious disturbances at the capital. Within a

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short while of Alexander's death reports reached Taganrog that the arrival of the body was to be the signal for a general insurrection, and the journey was in consequence postponed. It must, moreover, be remembered that communications in Russia were primitive, and that the actual transport of the body from so remote a spot as Taganrog was a serious undertaking. So, even after it had been decided that the move might safely be carried out, careful arrangements, involving serious delays, were required, and the body did not actually reach Tsarskoe Selo till March, 1826.

Comment was also provoked by the fact that the widow did not accompany the corpse on the journey. This, said the scandalmongers, was because she knew that the corpse was not her husband's; the truth being that the Empress was too ill to travel.

By 30th January the rumours were well started. "Already," wrote Christin from Moscow, "it is being generally said that the people want the coffin opened, in order to prove that it is really the Emperor Alexander who has been laid in it." <sup>1</sup>

It may well be asked why, seeing that reports of this nature must have been common knowledge, no steps were taken to allay the popular suspicions. The explanation is probably to be found in that

<sup>1</sup> Waliszewski : *Le Règne d'Alexandre I.*, chapter xv.



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mania for secrecy which distinguished the Russian bureaucracy up to the day of its downfall, and which not only invested such events as the Imperial burial with an unnecessary privacy, but was habitually reluctant to explain circumstances which admitted of a very simple explanation.

Nor were the new Emperor's actions calculated to scotch the stories. When the body arrived at Tsarskoe Selo on 12th March, he arranged for the formal opening of the coffin to take place at a late hour of the night and in the presence of members of the family only. Once more, the reason was excellent ; the embalming of the body at Taganrog had been defective, and decomposition had set in. But no word of this was allowed at the time to reach the people.

Again, when the coffin was opened, some of the attendants, listening behind closed doors, heard Alexander's mother, the Dowager Empress Marie Feodorovna, exclaim, " Yes, it really is my son, my dear Alexander ! " as though she too had doubted.

Later, the legend was elaborated. The real corpse was identified : it was that of Alexander's courier Maskov, who had been sent for from St. Petersburg and done to death ! Unfortunately for this theory, the courier predeceased his master by a fortnight, so that he could not possibly have been the man who was known to have drawn his last breath in the presence of the

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Empress Elizabeth on the morning of 1st December.

There is one further piece of evidence, mentioned by Waliszewski,<sup>1</sup> which has been quoted by the supporters of the "survival" story. This is contained in a letter, dated 12th January, 1826, from Princess Sophie Volkonski to the Empress Marie Feodorovna, in which the writer alludes in ambiguous and involved language to "a painful matter, but one which the mother of the deceased might be able to communicate to him who perhaps might profit by the intimate observation made on the moral state of the dearly loved sovereign of glorious memory." This cryptic message was evidently aimed at the Emperor Nicholas. What the "painful matter" was has never been disclosed, but, as Waliszewski drily points out, this is scarcely the language in which to inform a mother that her son, whom she is mourning as dead, is still alive !

The foregoing examination, brief as it has been, is probably sufficient to show how frail is the foundation of the "survival" legend. In fact it is so weak that one is tempted to conclude that the stories owed their origin less to any facts which seemed to suggest a deception, than to the character of Alexander himself. It was known that he was subject to moods of profound mysticism, to religious crises so acute as to resemble

<sup>1</sup> *Le Règne d'Alexandre I.*, chapter xv.

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the “ conversions ” of the revivalist mission ; that he was utterly weary of the cares of government, tired, dispirited, disillusioned. Might he not have staged a fictitious death and burial in order to facilitate his departure from a world which had ceased to attract him, to the more congenial atmosphere of a monastery or a hermitage ? He had let fall from time to time remarks which seemed to suggest that, like the Emperor Asoka or Charles V., he would welcome an old age in religious seclusion. On the very day that the fatal fever attacked him he visited a monastery in the Crimea, spent over an hour there in meditation, and observed to two of his attendants, “ If I should one day retire from the cares of government, I should wish to pass my old age in this spot.”<sup>1</sup> Remarks of this kind, possibly exaggerated as they passed from mouth to mouth, would at least create an atmosphere favourable to the legend.

### III

In the course of years the flimsy fragments of evidence which we have been examining would probably have fallen into oblivion, had they not been invested with a new significance on the death, on 20th January, 1864, of the hermit Fiodor Kouzmitch at Tomsk in Siberia.

Fiodor's antecedents were sufficiently obscure

<sup>1</sup> Lloyd : *Alexander I.*

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to encourage the mystery-makers. He first appears in 1836, in the neighbourhood of Krasnooufimsk, a small town in the province of Perm. Here he was unfortunate enough to arouse the suspicions of a farrier, with whom he had entered into conversation, and who handed him over to the local authorities. He was brought before the magistrates, to whom he was unable to give any other account of himself than that he had lost his memory. This the authorities seem to have regarded as an admission of guilt, for, after giving him a good flogging as a vagabond, they deported him to Siberia, which was beginning to be used as a dumping-ground for undesirables. Fiodor's appointed place of exile was the small town of Ziertsaly, in the province of Ienisseisk, where for five years he earned a bare livelihood by working in a distillery. About the year 1842 Fiodor began to acquire, on what grounds it is difficult to say, a reputation for sanctity. He developed a taste for solitude which was quite in keeping with this tendency, and finally decided to leave the distillery and to follow the profession of a hermit. A certain charitable Cossack next invited him to share his humble lodging, but—such is the power of competition—no sooner did the villagers of Ziertsaly hear that their holy man was threatening to leave them than they promptly offered better terms, which Fiodor accepted.

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So, in his next transformation, we find him installed in a house of his own. As the years passed, his reputation grew, and with it the amenities of his new calling. The possession of a private hermit seems to have been a coveted luxury among the well-to-do of Siberia, and after gratifying a succession of patrons Fiodor was eventually taken over by a manufacturer of the name of Khromov.

So far, it may be observed, the hermit had not been associated with any particular mystery. His origin, of course, was unknown, but so were the origins of a good many of the compulsory colonists of Siberia. The name he gave was probably assumed, but for good and sufficient reasons numbers of the exiles were living under aliases. It was said that he corresponded with people of high rank in Russia, but so might many a disgraced younger son of noble family. Khromov undoubtedly made the most of the mystery, for the more distinguished the antecedents of the guest, the greater the credit to the host. Still, it is fairly certain that neither at this time, nor, in fact, until Fiodor's death, was there any attempt to identify him with Alexander I. He was merely an interesting piece of property, distinguished for his sanctity and for the aristocratic connections he was believed to have.

There is very little doubt that the Alexander legend started with Khromov, who probably



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believed that there was money in it. The idea was perhaps suggested to him by an event which took place in 1849. Among Fiodor's disciples was a young peasant girl of Krasnorietchie, who undertook, presumably on the hermit's instructions, to make a pilgrimage round the monasteries of Russia. She took with her on this ambitious tour letters of introduction from Fiodor to various eminent people, and among them to the Countess Osten-Sacken, the sister of an old mistress of Alexander's father, the Emperor Paul. The Countess took the girl to her house at Kremientchouk, where it happened that about the same time the Emperor Nicholas came to stay. The young peasant, whose name was Alexandra Nikiforovna, was presented to him; her pious mission was explained; and the Tsar is alleged to have taken some interest in the girl. Here at length we find the first tenuous connection between the Siberian hermit and the Imperial household.

In 1852 Alexandra returned to her home, and on seeing Fiodor is reported to have exclaimed, "Oh, how like you are to the Emperor Alexander I.!"

A good deal of doubt has been cast on the whole story, which in any case proves nothing except to those who like to swallow a tale and to look round for the evidence afterwards. In course of time the episode blossomed forth anew,



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expanding into a second journey, during which the girl was presented to the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, wife of Nicholas I.

Fiodor Kouzmitch died in 1864, and no sooner was he in his grave than Khromov began to exploit him to the utmost. He began by endeavouring to vindicate his extreme sanctity before the Bishop of Tomsk. There was the sweet odour which from no apparent cause had filled the dead man's dwelling; there was the miraculous light which had shone around him; and so on. The matter was finally referred to Benjamin, Archbishop of Irkutsk, a man of saintly life and considerable discernment, who dismissed Khromov's petition with the remark that the man was mad. The Archbishop perhaps showed greater indulgence to Khromov than the latter deserved.

The Alexander legend, however, met with a much greater measure of success on its production. First, there was the supposed likeness between Alexander and Fiodor, which seems to have suggested the idea to Khromov.

The Russian historian Schilder gives the following description of the hermit : <sup>1</sup>

“ According to accounts he was tall, broad-shouldered, with a stately carriage, so that by his fine appearance, as well as by his quiet, grave speech, he made a fascinating impression

<sup>1</sup> *History of Alexander I.*

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on his companions. All were at once struck by the extraordinary stateliness of his figure, and by the manner and movements of the old man ; by his gait and speech, and particularly by the magnificent features, by the mild look of the eyes, by the charming sound of his voice, and by the wonderful language he used ; at times he appeared stern and even commanding. All this induced his guests to bow the knee and to kneel at his feet. In all the widespread facsimile photographs of a portrait of Fiodor Kouzmitch, he is shown as standing in his cell, in a long white gown tied by a girdle, a grey-headed old man with a long beard. One hand rests on his breast, the other is fixed in his girdle. In the corner of the poor cell are seen a crucifix and the image of the Blessed Virgin. The face of the old man suggests the features of the Emperor Alexander I."

Schilder, however, for all his historical pretensions, was not an unprejudiced witness ; in fact, if Khromov was the father of the Alexander legend, this learned but gullible historian may be described not unfairly as its godfather. How he came to this position is a very interesting story ; it was told to Waliszewski by the late M. Isvolsky, at one time Russian ambassador at Paris, who had heard it from Schilder himself at a meeting of a learned society of which they were both members. Schilder, so he said, was sitting one

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evening at his writing table. He had been working very hard at his history of Alexander I. and, overcome with fatigue, began to doze. Suddenly he saw, standing before him, a tall old man whose features resembled those of the Siberian hermit, lately deceased, whose portrait he had recently seen, and whom rumour was already identifying with the Emperor Alexander I. While Schilder sat, a little alarmed by this apparition, the old man said to him :

“ Well, do you not recognise me ? ”

And at once he knew intuitively that he was in the very presence of the sovereign, to the writing of whose biography he had devoted so many years. He fell at the old man's feet weeping—and woke up.

Converted by this vision, Schilder remained to the end of his life convinced that Fiodor was in truth Alexander. The confession, coming from one who claimed to be a scientific historian, must be exceptional of its kind. It is difficult to avoid the suspicion that his conviction may have coloured his description of the hermit : certainly it blinded him to a few minor discrepancies which he should have been the first to detect. For instance, the portrait, to which reference has been made, shows quite an ordinary old man—a very common type, in fact—with long hair and a beard. But in 1825, as we know, Alexander was nearly bald ! Again, we find no

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allusion in the accounts of the hermit to any physical defect ; what, then, had become of the Emperor's lameness, which was so pronounced just before his death ? One is tempted to conclude that a great deal of the talk about the hermit's " extraordinary stateliness " and " magnificent features " was inspired by Khromov and his accomplices for their particular purpose. Special attention, for example, has been directed to Fiodor's personal cleanliness, an unusual quality in a hermit, but a well-known trait of Alexander I. Unfortunately this claim also is exploded by Fiodor's diocesan, the Bishop of Tomsk, who reported of the hermit that " he never washed, except his feet once a year."

In other ways Khromov undoubtedly did his best to foster the story. He made much of a little bag, bequeathed to him by Fiodor, in which, so the hermit declared, the secret of his identity would be found. Inside it were some documents covered with isolated words and hieroglyphics, which, if really a cipher and not random nonsense, have nevertheless defeated all interpretation. The writing bears no resemblance to Alexander's.

On the strength of the evidence which Waliszewski has collected, no rational person can doubt that, whoever Fiodor may have been, he was not the Emperor Alexander. Who, then, was he ? What was the truth about that connection with persons in high places which we

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may recognise to have existed and which was responsible for the Alexander legend? These may seem hopeless questions, but Waliszewski makes an interesting attempt to answer them. He admits that Fiodor corresponded with Count Osten-Sacken, the husband of the lady who took such an interest in the peasant girl Alexandra. No doubt this correspondence was purely devotional in character, the Count being deeply interested in religion. But there may have been another reason for it. It is just possible that Fiodor was really related to the Countess, who was by birth an Ouchakov, a family in which the Christian names of Fiodor and Kouzma frequently occur. If we may suppose this, we reach a further conjecture. The Countess's sister was the Princess Czartoryska, a mistress of the Emperor Paul, Alexander's father, by whom she had a son, Simon Vielikoi. There was some mystery about this young man's fate. According to one account he died in 1794 in the Antilles; according to another he died some years later at Kronstadt. The truth is not known for certain, which is curious, considering his parentage. One of the reports is certainly wrong; possibly both were. At any rate Waliszewski, with admirable caution, suggests that Simon may not have died until a much later date, and that he may even have been Khromov's hermit. The hypothesis (for which there is of course not an atom of



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evidence) would make Fiodor half-brother to Alexander, thus explaining any resemblance that may have existed, and nephew to the Countess Osten-Sacken, with whom it would be natural for him to correspond.

. . . . .

Curiously enough, the Alexander myth has received fresh impetus from a story which recently appeared in some of the leading newspapers in England and on the Continent. It was to the effect that the Soviet Government had been opening the graves of some of the Emperors in the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, and that in Alexander's they found not a body but a heap of stones. The discovery, if genuine, would certainly reopen the mystery, though it could scarcely be taken as establishing the long-sought identity between Alexander and the hermit of Ziertsaly. But, so far as it has been possible to ascertain, the report was a complete invention. According to the Soviet Government, "there is no foundation whatever" for it; and the same authority has given the gratuitous information that the story probably arose from the fact that "certain tombs of 'saints', alleged to contain holy relics, have been opened and found to contain only stones."<sup>1</sup>

Those who may be inclined to doubt the value of a disclaimer from such a source may well ask

<sup>1</sup> From a letter to the author from the Soviet authorities.



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themselves with what object the Bolsheviks would have set such a story in currency, or, having deliberately circulated it, would now repudiate it. On the whole we may believe that on this occasion they are telling the truth ; this new tale thus passes very appropriately into the Alexander legend, where it will find itself in the excellent company provided by Father Pierling, the historian Schilder, and Khromov.

*THE MYSTERY OF THE*  
*“MAINE”*





## THE MYSTERY OF THE *MAINE*

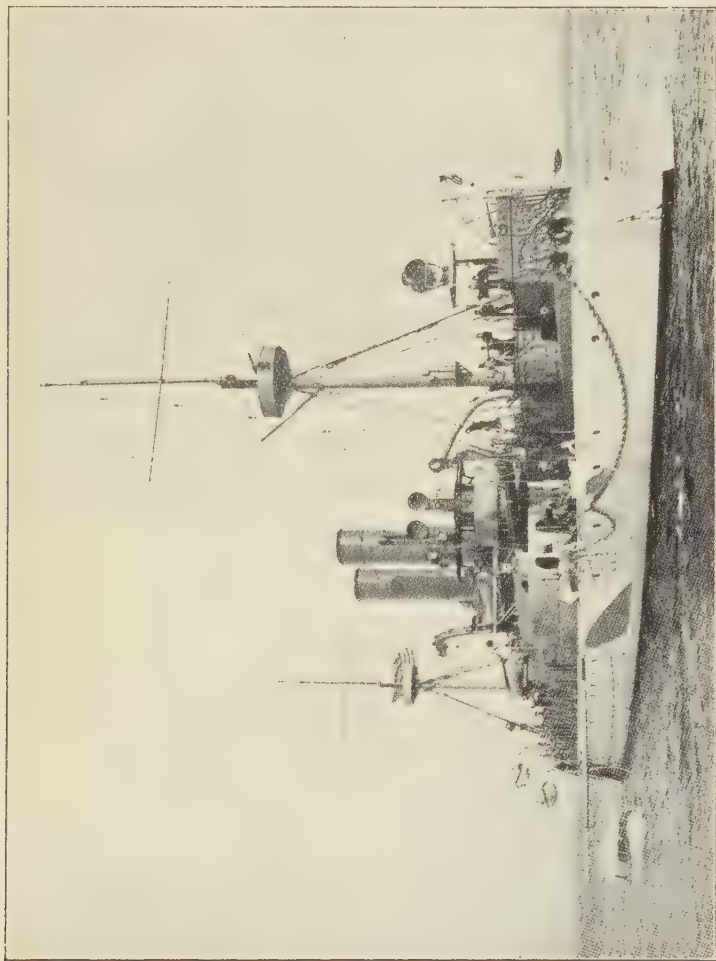
**I**T was a heavy, rather breathless night in February, following one of those leaden days on which the lack of sun seems to make the heat, if anything, more oppressive. At half-past nine the *cafés* in the city of Havana were still crowded. There were a great many Spanish officers and officials about, for in the back country of Cuba the insurrection still dragged wearily on. Doubtless that guerilla war, which Spain had been straining her resources to stamp out, was foremost in men's minds that night in the capital, though, in the presence of so many Spaniards, none but the most loyal sentiments could be expressed. Yet there must, too, have been talk on another subject which for some days past had been agitating the people of Havana.

Riding at anchor in the harbour was a battleship of the Navy of the United States, the *Maine*. Just a month earlier, on 15th January, 1898, there had been riots in the city. They had been provoked by Spanish volunteers who had come out to Cuba to fight the insurrection, and had

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been directed chiefly against the United States, whose attitude towards the Cuban troubles was much resented by Spaniards. No one had been seriously injured, and no property had been destroyed except in one or two newspaper offices, but there had been a lot of wild and rather childish talk, and threats and insults. A few days later the *Maine* had arrived. At such a moment the official reason given for her presence was scarcely flattering to Spanish intelligence. It was represented that the Government of the United States wished to resume the friendly naval visits which had been customary before the insurrection, and had accordingly ordered the *Maine* to Havana. The Spaniards naturally protested, but were too late to prevent the battleship coming; all that they could do by way of a polite retort was to send the cruiser *Vizcaya* to New York!

Rumour, of course, had exaggerated the size and significance of the *Maine*. She was only a second-class battleship, of 6682 tons, with an armament of four 10-inch and six 6-inch guns. But it was said that she was the finest vessel in the American Navy, that her coming was a veiled threat, and that she had been sent to put heart into the insurgents. Officially, her commander, Captain Sigsbee, and his officers were treated on arrival with Castilian courtesy. Formal visits were exchanged with General Blanco, who



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had just succeeded Weyler as Captain-General of Cuba, and with Admiral Manterola, the naval commander-in-chief. The American officers also attended a luncheon party given by the American Consul, General Lee, and went to one or two bull-fights; and the population had behaved, on the whole, with restraint. Socially, the war-ship was boycotted; on one occasion a ferry-boat had crossed the *Maine's* bows and cat-calls were heard from its passengers; and ashore Captain Sigsbee remarked on the black looks which he encountered, particularly at the bull-ring. Still, considering that in Havana the majority of the population was pro-Spanish, the visitors could not complain of their reception.

Yet under the surface feeling ran high, as we may gather from this leaflet, which was circulated throughout the city, a copy even reaching Captain Sigsbee.

“SPANIARDS,

“LONG LIVE SPAIN WITH HONOUR!

“What are you doing that you allow yourselves to be insulted in this way? Do you not see what they have done for us in withdrawing our brave and beloved Weyler, who at this very time would have finished with this unworthy, rebellious rabble who are trampling on our flag and on our honour?

“Autonomy is imposed on us to cast us

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aside and give places of honour and authority to those who initiated this rebellion, these low-bred autonomists, ungrateful sons of our beloved country !

“ And, finally, these Yankee pigs who meddle in our affairs, humiliating us to the last degree, and, for a still greater taunt, order to us a man-of-war of their rotten squadron, after insulting us in their newspapers with articles sent from our own home !

“ Spaniards ! the moment for action is come. Do not go to sleep ! Let us show these vile traitors that we have not yet lost our pride, and that we know how to protest with the vigour befitting a nation worthy and strong, as our Spain is and always will be !

“ Death to the Americans !

“ Death to Autonomy !

“ Long live Spain !

“ Long live Weyler ! ”

Weyler, it should be explained, was the hero of the military party, and had stood for a policy of no compromise with rebellion. He was particularly objectionable to the Americans, who associated him with the concentration camps, which had recently become so notorious ; so that his recall and the grant of a measure of autonomy to Cuba were resented by the army as a humiliating concession to the United States.

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Probably, on this evening of 15th February, the leaflet was passing from hand to hand in the *cafés*, and, as the wine flowed, there was much wild talk against the “Yankee pigs” and the “man-of-war of their rotten squadron.”

But at twenty minutes to ten something happened which cut short the debates and sent everyone headlong to the water’s edge. From the direction of the harbour came a report, described by those who were nearest as resembling a gunshot, followed by a tremendous explosion. At the spot where, a moment before, the *Maine* had been riding peacefully at her anchorage, rose a mighty column of flame and smoke ; and when, some minutes later, the smoke lifted, all that could be seen of the American battleship was a dark, huddled heap of wreckage, one end of which was still burning furiously, while the other end was crowded with men.

From the evidence of the survivors and from Captain Sigsbee’s own account of the disaster,<sup>1</sup> we can picture the scenes on board. Captain Sigsbee was writing letters in his cabin when the explosion came. He describes it as “a bursting, rending and crashing sound or roar of immense volume, largely metallic in character . . . followed by a succession of heavy, ominous, metallic sounds, probably caused by the overturning of the central superstructure and falling *débris*.”

<sup>1</sup> Captain C. D. Sigsbee : *The Maine*.

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The lights went out. All was darkness and smoke. The ship listed to port and began to sink. Captain Sigsbee groped his way hurriedly on deck, where he found most of the officers and a few of the men already collected. With the men and the few fire appliances available he tried to fight the fire, but the ship was settling fast, and soon very little besides the poop, on which the survivors were gathered, remained above the surface. He also posted sentries in case of an attack, which seemed a clear possibility. "There was the sound of many voices from the shore," he wrote, "suggestive of cheers."

Meanwhile the work of rescue had started. Some of the men had been hurled into the water by the explosion, and many more had jumped in to avoid the flames or to escape before the ship sank. Boats had been lowered by the American steamer *City of Washington* and by the Spanish cruiser *Alfonso XII.*, and these assisted the two undamaged boats of the *Maine* to pick up the men who were struggling in the waters of the harbour. Although the work went on most of the night, and many rescues were made, the casualty roll was terrible: two officers and two hundred and fifty-two petty officers and men perished, while twenty-four officers and only seventy-six of the crew were saved.

As we might expect under the circumstances, the accounts of the explosion given by various

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survivors differ in detail. One man described it as "a trembling and buckling of the decks, and then a prolonged roar." Another heard a sharp report and saw a flash of light, followed by a second explosion which seemed to lift the ship out of the water. One of the officers felt "an under water explosion," and saw "the whole starboard side of the deck spring up in the air" like the edge of the crater of a volcano. Some definitely noted two explosions; others only remembered one. But the discrepancies are trivial. One point was clear. The explosion or explosions occurred in the fore part of the ship. This of course explains the high mortality among the crew, who were berthed forward, and the comparatively few casualties among the officers, who were aft.

Mr. H. W. Wilson thus describes the superstructure of the *Maine* in his naval history of the Spanish-American War.<sup>1</sup>

"The *Maine* had three superstructures, rising from the main deck. There was one forward; then a clear space and the forward turret to starboard; then the midships superstructure, with two funnels and two boat-cranes, the funnels fore and aft on its centre line, the cranes on either side rising from the main deck abreast the after funnel. At the forward end of the superstructure was the conning-

<sup>1</sup> H. W. Wilson : *The Downfall of Spain*.



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tower, with the chart-house above it ; at the after end, inside the superstructure, on the port side, the galley, and on the starboard side the armoury. Aft the midships superstructure and between it and the after superstructure, well over to port, was the after turret. In the after superstructure were Captain Sigsbee's quarters ; above it the mainmast and a search-light platform. Rising from the forward superstructure was the foremast. The crew was berthed in the forward and amidships superstructure, and underneath the main deck, on the berth deck, forward and amidships. The officers were berthed aft, where were the ward-room and the gun-room."

As Mr. Wilson points out, the further forward the survivors were, the more severely they felt the explosion. Some had miraculous escapes. There was a corporal who was lying in his hammock and was blown clean through the awning above it. Another man, standing by the after funnel, saw a puff of smoke, went up in the air like a waterspout, and came down on the quarter-deck, some forty feet away. Men were flung violently about, blown in all directions like scraps of paper in a gale of wind, burned, choked with ashes, or half-drowned, yet somehow managed to crawl or scramble or swim to safety.

All agree that in a terrible and demoralising situation the officers and men of the *Maine*

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behaved magnificently. No one knew what had happened; the majority thought that the ship had been blown up by the Spaniards, and it seemed quite likely that a general attack would follow. This the survivors, most of whom were unarmed and suffering from shock, were ready to resist to the end. But there was yet another danger. Although the after part of the *Maine* was now grounded on the bottom of the harbour, it was feared that at any moment the 10-inch magazine might explode. So imminent did this catastrophe appear that at length Captain Sigsbee gave orders to abandon ship. Most of the survivors were taken aboard the *City of Washington*, but many of the wounded had already been removed to the *Alfonso XII.* and to the Spanish transport *Colon*.

The excitement caused by the sinking of the *Maine* was terrific. From the *City of Washington* Captain Sigsbee sent a telegram to the Navy Department, in which he notified it of the disaster and urged that "public opinion should be suspended until further report."

In the United States feeling ran high, and no one was inclined to accept the assurance of the Spanish authorities that they knew nothing about the explosion. The Government at once announced that there would be a full enquiry, and appealed to public opinion to remain calm until the finding of the Court was published. Natur-

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ally, in the States people had formed their own conclusions directly the news reached them; but outside North America very different opinions were current. In fact, for some months the civilised world was divided into two factions, of which one roundly charged the Spaniards with having blown up the *Maine*, while the other argued that the *Maine* must have blown herself up.

The Spaniards, too, declared their intention of holding an enquiry; divers were sent down by both Governments to examine the wreck and its immediate neighbourhood; the two Courts met and took evidence; and in about a month's time reports were presented which, as everyone had expected, took contradictory views of the cause of the explosion.

The Spanish Enquiry was, to put it politely, a little sketchy. The Court took the curious course of making a preliminary announcement of its verdict within five days of the disaster, before it had had time either to take the evidence or to make a proper examination of the wreck. The full Report, when it appeared, merely confirmed at much greater length this first and rather premature opinion. The explosion, according to the Spanish Court, could not have been caused by a mine. As the ship lay at anchor, such a mine must have been fired by electric current, conveyed through a cable. But, as no

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trace of any cable had been found in the harbour, this explanation must be rejected. In any case, no instance was known in which a mine had exploded a ship's magazine, yet it was certain that at least one, and possibly two, of the forward magazines of the *Maine* had blown up. And whereas the explosion of a mine was invariably followed by the appearance of quantities of dead fish on the surface, not a single dead fish had been seen in the harbour on the morning after the disaster.

There is, it must be owned, some force in these contentions. But the Spaniards, who appear to have concentrated their attention on the immediate neighbourhood of the wreck, without bothering overmuch about the wreck itself, exposed themselves to obvious criticism. So anxious were they to establish the innocence of Spain, that they issued that preliminary report, in which they tried to pre-judge the case, less than a week after the explosion, a period quite inadequate for an investigation that would be of any value. Nor did they make a proper examination of the survivors. This perhaps was not altogether their fault, as they did apply to the Americans for the necessary facilities, without unduly pressing the point. Such an examination, it is true, might have raised some embarrassing questions of procedure, but was surely essential if the facts were to be obtained. Nor did the Court deal

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with one or two delicate questions which were being loudly asked in the American Press. Had any mines been laid in Havana harbour? Were the authorities in Cuba in possession of explosives or torpedoes of a kind that might have accounted for the *Maine*? Perhaps, with a war against the United States imminent, it was not thought politic to give such information away, but the omission prejudiced the Spanish case in the eyes of the world. In short, the report simply declared that the *Maine* could not have been sunk by an exterior explosion, and that therefore the cause must have been spontaneous combustion in the coal bunkers or some kindred mishap. The calm detachment with which the Court discussed the various ways in which the *Maine* might have blown herself up must have been infinitely exasperating to Americans, whose minds were working on very different lines.

The American Court met at Havana on 21st February, six days after the disaster, and the day after the Spanish Court had made its first report. Their enquiry, which lasted a month, inspires more confidence than that of the Spaniards; but, like their rivals, they were restrained by circumstances from making their researches as thorough as they would have wished them to be. Just as it would have been an offence for the Spanish divers to probe too closely into the wreck, which even in its shattered con-



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dition retained the extra-territorial rights of a man-of-war, so the Americans could scarcely have dragged the harbour for traces of electric cables or cross-examined Spanish officials about their supplies of explosives or the dispositions, if any, of floating mines. In fact, while the Spaniards hunted the harbour for clues which they were naturally not too anxious to find, the Americans searched the wreck for signs of an interior explosion which the American Press was declaring to be too much of a coincidence to be possible.

Obviously this method of procedure was ludicrously inappropriate. The proper course would have been the appointment, under international auspices, of a neutral Court with full powers of investigation. But in those days the machinery for settling international disputes was rudimentary, and it is doubtful whether either Spain or the United States would have accepted any form of arbitration, or any verdict which might have been taken to reflect on national honour.

The evidence taken by the American Court was of two kinds : that of the officers and crew of the *Maine* who reported on the state of the ship before the explosion and on their actual experiences on the night of 15th February ; and that of the experts and divers who examined the wreck and the harbour bottom in its immediate neighbourhood after the disaster.



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The Court reported on 21st March. It rejected the theory that an interior explosion was the first cause of the loss of the ship, and found that the "*Maine* was destroyed by the explosion of a submarine mine, which caused the partial explosion of two or more of the forward magazines."

A month later Congress recognised the independence of Cuba, and directed President McKinley to take steps to compel the Spanish forces to evacuate the island. The Spanish Minister at Washington at once called for his passports, and the war, which was to prove so fatal to Spain's Colonial Empire, began.

While sooner or later American intervention in Cuba was probably unavoidable, there can be no doubt that the sinking of the *Maine* hastened the outbreak of war. Historic justice is therefore concerned in getting to the truth of the matter, for if it could be proved that the *Maine* was not destroyed by the Spaniards—an opinion widely entertained outside Great Britain and the United States—the action of Congress would be difficult to defend.

Let us, without venturing too deeply into technicalities, weigh the various possibilities; and let us begin, where the Spanish Court began and ended, by looking for an interior explosion. We must note that on one point both Courts are agreed: there were two explosions, the original

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one (whatever its cause may have been) and the explosion of one or more of the magazines which followed immediately after. The vital question is—What caused the first explosion?

There are, of course, many ways in which an interior explosion might have taken place. There is the possibility that an infernal machine was smuggled aboard; but, as Captain Sigsbee had given careful orders that visitors from the shore were to be followed and closely watched wherever they went in the ship, we may rule this out.

The spontaneous combustion theory offers a more feasible explanation, and is worth examining, if only because it attracted the favourable attention of the Spanish Court. Many cases of spontaneous combustion in the coal bunkers have been known to occur, particularly in the American Navy. Just before the *Maine* blew up, one or two outbreaks took place aboard American warships, and shortly after the declaration of war there was actually a case in the *New York*. The point, too, which impressed foreign experts, was the proximity of some of the coal bunkers to the magazines; trouble in one of these bunkers might well have explained the catastrophe. Now, in the *Maine* there were six bunkers directly abutting on the magazines. Four of these were empty of coal and had just been painted, and a fifth was only half full and had been in use during the evening of the 15th.

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There could have been no spontaneous combustion there. We are left with one bunker, holding forty tons of soft New River coal, in which the mischief might have arisen ; but the possibility fades when we learn that the coal had been carefully inspected before being loaded, and again on the day of the explosion by the engineer officer on duty. Three of the bulkheads surrounding it were not only accessible, but could, and probably would, have been touched by anyone going down the narrow passage into the loading, hydraulic and dynamo rooms, and also by the men, who were in the habit of lounging against the upper part of it. The fourth bulkhead had just been painted. If, therefore, a rise in temperature, which is the danger signal, had occurred in that bunker, it could hardly have escaped notice. It may be added that all the bunkers were equipped with electrical alarms and thermometers, and that the temperatures were regularly taken and recorded. It seems that we must look elsewhere for the cause of the explosion.

Let us turn to the magazines themselves. No smokeless powder and no high explosive shells were stored in any of those which might have exploded, while the torpedo heads, primers and detonators were all aft, under the ward-room, and were unaffected. There were no steam pipes or dangerous electric wires in the magazines, the lights being contained in light-boxes, wires and

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lights alike being separated from the magazines by a double plating of glass. No loose powder was allowed to be about, the magazines were kept locked, and proper shoes were worn by men working in them. With all these precautions an accident could scarcely have happened.

The Spanish Court, however, advanced another suggestion. Don Saturnino Montojo, "an illustrious lieutenant in our navy,"<sup>1</sup> referred to the case of the *Reina Regente*, a Spanish warship built on the Clyde. While she was still in the hands of the builders, an explosion occurred, which was traced to the formation of gases in a water-tight compartment. It is perhaps just possible, as the Court suggested, that something similar might have happened in the *Maine's* bunkers, but the generation of gas is caused by absence of ventilation, and is attended by a rise in temperature, so that with ventilation pipes and thermometers and a proper system of inspection the danger should have been negligible.

Then there are the boilers. Only two were in use at the time, and these were remote from the magazines. They were reported to be in good condition, and, as the ship was lying in harbour, were working at comparatively low pressure. They could not have been responsible.

There remains the possibility of carelessness in handling or leaving about inflammable

<sup>1</sup> Spanish *Report*.

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materials. Here again the arrangements appear to have been beyond criticism. "Waste was carefully looked after. . . . Varnishes, driers, alcohol and other combustibles of this nature were stowed on or above the maindeck, and could not have had anything to do with the destruction of the *Maine*."<sup>1</sup>

We can understand that, with this evidence before them (and apart from the appearance of the wreck, which we shall discuss later), the American Court, by a process of exclusion, reached their finding that the explosion was caused by some agency outside the ship.

The suggestion that this agency was a torpedo, fired at fairly close range, was not entertained by the Court. It is inconceivable that a torpedo tube could have been mounted and discharged without the connivance of the authorities and without several people being in the secret; we should have to suppose that the authorities themselves were the guilty parties, and that the manner of the *Maine's* destruction was generally known in Havana. Still, as the ship lay within eight hundred yards of the shore, we must admit that she could have been torpedoed.

The Court, as we have seen, was of opinion that the explosion was caused by a mine. Against this view several grave objections might be urged. A mine on exploding produces a dull,

<sup>1</sup> American Report.



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heavy concussion, whereas most of the witnesses described the first explosion as a sharp report like a gunshot. A mine, too, should have thrown up a column of water, but none was observed by anyone. Possibly the cloud of fire and smoke which poured at once from the ship obscured it ; or the mine might have gone off immediately under the hull. The point is not very important. A further difficulty is the absence of any upheaval of the ship after the first explosion. Mr. H. W. Wilson points out <sup>1</sup> that we might expect to find that the ship was at once " thrown violently over to starboard and considerably lifted." Yet most of the witnesses only allude to the upheaval following the second explosion. Nor was the concussion felt, as it might have been, by the other ships in the harbour. The only ship which reported a shock was the British steamer *Deva*, lying about six hundred yards from the *Maine*, whose commander, Captain Teasdale, thought he " had been collided with." A more curious problem was the absence of dead fish in the vicinity of the explosion. Havana harbour teems with fish, and some of these should have been thrown to the surface. It was suggested that the fish were in the habit of leaving the harbour at night, and, alternatively, that the explosion would merely stun them, and that later, recovering, they would have swum away.

<sup>1</sup> *The Downfall of Spain.*



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An even more serious objection remains. It was unknown for either a mine or a torpedo to explode a ship's magazine. In the more recent experience of the Great War, when mines were used on a far greater scale than ever previously, only one instance, I believe, occurred—that of H.M.S. *Russell* off Malta in 1916—in which even the shell-room of a warship was exploded by contact with a mine. A mine, therefore, would sink a ship, but was most unlikely to explode its magazine. The American Court scarcely attempted to meet this difficulty, though, if we accept their view that the mine went off right under the ship's bottom, and if it carried what was, for those days, an exceptionally heavy charge, it might possibly have exploded the magazine; and that is all that can be said.

Mines, of course, are of two sorts: there are those which explode on contact, and those which are controlled by electric cable from the shore. The Spaniards would hardly have laid one of the former kind in Havana harbour, which was frequented by ships of all nations, including their own. On the other hand, if the mine which destroyed the *Maine* was electrically controlled, someone was guilty of a piece of cold-blooded and murderous treachery. Are we, after all, to believe that the Spanish authorities in Havana deliberately plotted the outrage? Apart from the morality of the business, they were surely

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incapable of an act of such supreme folly. They must have known that it would make war with the United States inevitable, and, whatever they may have imagined would be the outcome of that, they must have realised that at least it was not going to make their task in Cuba any easier. At the time the Spaniards denied that any mines had been laid off the coast of the island, but early in April it was known that they had mines in Cuba and were using them. In fact, Admiral Beranger, the Secretary to the Navy, actually told a reporter that attacks on Cuban ports were not apprehended, because "Havana, as well as Cienfuegos, Nuevitas and Santiago are defended by electrical and automobile torpedoes."<sup>1</sup> He added that one hundred and ninety mines had been sent out by Señor Canovas del Castillo (who was assassinated in August, 1897, six months before the explosion), and installed by an expert, Señor Chacon.

Apart from the absence of any factor which might have caused an interior explosion, the American verdict relied upon the condition of the hull.

As soon after the explosion as was practicable, divers were sent down to explore the wreckage. Their work, which occupied about five weeks, was carried out under considerable difficulties. The *Maine* had sunk in from five to five and a

<sup>1</sup> *El Heraldo*.

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half fathoms of water, and the bottom of the harbour was composed of soft mud, into which the shattered hull settled deeper almost daily. Moreover, the explosion had been so disintegrating that a diver could get no clear idea of what he was exploring. He found, not a ship, but a tangled mass of steel. Certain facts, however, were laid before and accepted by the American Court :

“ At Frame 17 the outer shell of the ship, from a point eleven and a half feet from the middle line of the ship and six feet above the keel when in normal position, has been forced up so as to be now about four feet above the surface of the water, therefore about thirty-four feet above where it would be had the ship sunk uninjured. The outside bottom plating is bent into a reversed V shape ( $\Delta$ ), the afterwing of which, about fifteen feet broad and thirty-two feet in length, is doubled back upon itself against the continuation of the same plating, extending forward. At Frame 18 the vertical keel is broken in two and the flat keel bent into an angle similar to the angle formed by the outside bottom plating. This break is now about six feet below the surface of the water, and about thirty feet above its normal position. In the opinion of the Court, this effect could have been produced only by the explosion of a mine situated under the bottom

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of the ship at about Frame 18 and somewhat on the port side of the ship.”<sup>1</sup>

This is as near as anyone got to explaining the mysterious disaster, as a result of which the United States lost a great battleship, two hundred and fifty-four men their lives, and Spain her finest colonies.

In Continental countries it was boldly asserted and generally believed that the American Court of Enquiry was a prejudiced body which had made up its mind what it was going to report before it started to take the evidence, and that the *Maine* had been sunk through neglect of some obvious precaution, through carelessness or bad discipline aboard. Yet the Americans were satisfied that the truth had been ascertained, and for some years there was no question of further investigation. Not until 1909, when the wrecked battleship was declared to be a danger to navigation, was the project of raising her seriously considered. Early in 1910 Congress voted a sum of \$500,000 for this purpose, and the work was entrusted to engineers of the United States Army.

The plan adopted was most ingenious, and, although it cost much more money than Congress had anticipated, was ultimately and in a modified form rewarded with complete success. During the twelve years that had elapsed since the disaster the wreck had become so deeply em-

<sup>1</sup> *American Report.*

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bedded in the mud at the bottom of the harbour that ordinary salvage operations were impracticable. So the engineers resolved to enclose the whole mass in a huge coffin dam, to be constructed in a framework of steel piles, encircling the wreck and driven down through twenty feet of mud into the solid clay beneath. The piles were to rise five feet above the surface of the sea, and were to be connected by an immense barrel-shaped wall; so that when the work was completed, the water could be pumped out of the enclosed space and the wreck would lie in a watertight cavity, out of reach of the sea.

After a year of work the coffin dam was still unfinished, and more than double the amount originally voted by Congress had been spent; so, as public opinion in the States was growing restive, the original plan was modified. The after-part of the ship, which had not been seriously affected by the explosion and was fairly intact, was separated from the wreckage, bulk-headed, floated, taken out into deep water and sunk. The forward portion alone remained; and, in order to deal with this, a smaller coffin dam was begun, and was completed before the end of 1911.

The wreckage was now carefully examined by Naval Constructor W. B. Ferguson, whose conclusions on the main points at issue tallied with those of the original American Court. His important discovery was a curved bottom plate



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which, he maintained, indicated an exterior explosion by a mine. This mine, filled with a low explosive that would distribute the explosion over a wide area, came in contact with the *Maine's* bottom at a point immediately below the first longitudinal on the port side of the vertical keel. Above the curved bottom plate, which marked the point of contact, was the six-inch magazine, where the black powder used for salutes was stored. This, igniting, fired the other forward magazine.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Ferguson's opinion was accepted by the United States Navy Department in its final report :

“The Board finds that the injuries to the bottom of the *Maine* were caused by the explosion of a charge of a low form of explosives on to the exterior of the ship between Frames 28 and 31 and Strake 6 on the port side. This resulted in the igniting and exploding of the contents of the six-inch reserve magazine, the said contents including a large quantity of black powder. A more or less complete explosion of the contents of the remaining forward magazine followed.”<sup>2</sup>

That should have been the end of the mystery. Curiously enough, however, the renewed investigation into the sinking of the *Maine*, although,

<sup>1</sup> *Scientific American*, 27th January, 1912.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, 9th December, 1911.



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in fact, it clearly vindicated the American Court, was held in some foreign countries to have had the opposite result, and to have established the innocence of Spain. This odd belief, which still has its adherents, can be traced to an unfortunate report published in the English newspapers early in July, 1911, when the coffin dam was still unfinished, and before any proper examination of the wreckage could have been made. General Bixby, the engineer officer in charge of the salvage operations, was reported to have stated that the explosion of the magazines could not have been produced from outside the ship, and that numerous indications on the hull proved the explosion to have been interior in origin. He was alleged to have added that the cause of the explosion remained obscure, but could not have been a Spanish mine, and that "a terrible mistake had been occasioned."

By an extraordinary oversight these statements were allowed to remain unchallenged for nearly two years; and indeed they attracted more attention in Europe than the official American Report when it was issued. At length an article in the *Fortnightly Review*, referring to the admissions, was brought before General Bixby's notice, and produced an immediate denial that he had ever said anything of the kind.

The General was able to point out, firstly, that the examination of the wreckage lay altogether

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outside his province, and, secondly, that when the reports first appeared the wreck was still buried in the mud, and no one was in a position to make dogmatic statements about the explosion.<sup>1</sup>

The *Maine*, then, was destroyed by a Spanish mine, but not necessarily, unless we are to frame a charge of great treachery as well as of great folly, with the knowledge of the Spanish authorities at Havana. Let us try briefly to reconstruct the event.

When it was found that the visit of the *Maine* could not be prevented, we may suppose that the Spanish command either laid an electrically controlled mine at the spot where the *Maine* would anchor, or arranged for the *Maine* to anchor at a spot where such a mine had already been laid. In view of the strained relations between the two countries, this was a perfectly reasonable precaution. War might have broken out at any moment, and had the *Maine* been in the harbour when hostilities began, the Spaniards would have been justified in blowing her up, just as she would have been justified in doing all the damage she could to the city and forts. As a matter of fact, it is not at all likely that she would have stayed in such dangerous waters had war become really imminent, but we can let that pass.

<sup>1</sup> *Fortnightly Review*, March, 1913.

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The anchorage at which the *Maine* lay was, of course, determined by the port authorities. A Spanish pilot brought her in to Buoy Number 4, where she remained until the explosion. But it was noticed that this buoy was not quite in its charted place; and also that on the evening of the disaster the *Maine* had swung round on her moorings into rather an unusual position—indeed, into the very position she would have taken up in order to engage the batteries on shore. We may suppose that the mine had been laid with just such a contingency in view: a sudden declaration of war and a swift attempt on the part of the *Maine* to bring her guns to bear on the Spanish defences. That night some subordinate officer—or even perhaps someone who was not an officer at all—obtained access to the electrical gear controlling the mines in the harbour. He saw, by the dropping of a shutter, that the *Maine* was in contact with a mine, and—the temptation was more than he could resist.

After the explosion the Spaniards put themselves utterly in the wrong. They must have learnt the truth at once, and, instead of trying to cover their tracks, by every canon of honour and decency they should have made a clean breast of the business. Possibly an immediate confession, coupled with the punishment of the guilty party and an offer of full reparation, would not have satisfied America; but that was their

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plain duty, and, after all, war was not averted, and could not have been averted, by the tactics they chose.

Under the circumstances the United States were left with very little choice. Their battleship had been destroyed ; valuable lives had been lost ; and the Spaniards merely produced a Report in clear defiance of the evidence and the finding of the American Court of Enquiry. There are limits to the patience even of a peace-loving people.




*THE FOUNDLING OF  
NUREMBERG*







## THE FOUNDLING OF NUREMBERG

 N Whitsunday of 1828, George Weichmann, a master shoemaker of Nuremberg, was standing at the door of his house, when his attention was caught by a queer spectacle. He saw a lad, apparently some sixteen or seventeen years of age, wearing very wide trousers, a short jacket and a low-crowned hat, an outfit sufficiently far removed from the fashions of Nuremberg to strike the onlooker as rather droll. He looked tired, and was very dusty, and, as he came trudging down the hill towards the shoemaker's house, he kept bawling, "Hi, lad! Hi, lad!" which was an odd way for a stranger to accost a respectable citizen in his own town.

As he drew near, he ejaculated fairly clearly the words, "New Gate Street." Herr Weichmann, having a kind heart, offered to accompany the lad a little way and put him on his right road; and, when they had walked a short distance together, the stranger drew from his pocket a large sealed envelope, which he handed

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to his guide. It was addressed to "The Captain of the 4th Squadron of the Schmolischer Regiment"; on reading which, the shoemaker observed, "It will be best for us to go to the guard-room at the New Gate."

As they passed along the street they exchanged a few words. The stranger enquired in broken German whether the New Gate guard-room had been recently built, and when Weichmann asked him from what town he came, replied, "Ratisbon." The lad, however, seemed to find difficulty in understanding what was said to him.

On arrival at the guard-room the stranger was asked for a passport, which he did not possess. Nevertheless, he was allowed to enter, and, going up to a corporal and two soldiers, took off his hat very respectfully and tendered his letter. The soldiers told him to go to the Captain's house; so, parting from Weichmann, the boy went on alone, following the directions given him by the corporal.

Captain von Wessenig, for whom the letter was apparently intended, was out when the boy arrived, but Mesk his servant, and Hacker his groom, took charge of the lad, who told them that he wanted "to be a trooper as his father was." A little later he told Mesk that he had been forced to travel day and night, and had been carried when he was no longer able to walk. He had learnt to read and write, he said, and had

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been to school, to reach which he had had to cross a frontier every day. When he saw the horses in the stable he was delighted, saying, "There were five like this where I came from."

The groom offered him meat and beer, from which he turned with disgust, but he swallowed a long draught of water and devoured greedily some bread which was given him. As he seemed very tired and footsore, Hacker allowed him to curl up in the straw of the stable and go to sleep.

At about eight o'clock that evening Captain von Wessenig returned, and was told of the visitor. The boy was still asleep, and on being awakened came towards the officer smiling, took hold of his scabbard, and said, "I want to be such a one."

When asked his name, he replied, "I don't know, your Honour," and took his hat off, adding that his foster-father had told him "always to take off my hat and say, 'your Honour'."

Mesk then handed over the letter the boy had brought, and Captain von Wessenig, breaking the seal, read the following amazing communication :

"HONOURED SIR,

"I send you a lad who wishes to serve his King truly. This lad was brought to me on October 7th, 1812. I am a poor day-labourer with ten children of my own ; I have enough to do to get on at all. His mother asked me

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to bring up the boy. I asked her no questions, nor have I given notice to the county police that I had taken the boy. I thought I ought to take him as my son. I have brought him up as a good Christian; and since 1812 I have never let him go a step away from the house, so no one knows where he has been brought up, and he himself does not know the name of my house, nor of the place; you may ask him, but he can't tell you. I have taught him to read and to write; he can write as well as myself. When we ask him what he would like to be, he says a soldier, like his father. If he had parents (which he has not) he would have been a scholar; only show him a thing and he can do it.

“I have only taken him as far as Neumarkt; from there he went on by himself. I have told him that when he is a soldier I may come to see him, otherwise he is off my hands.

“Honoured Sir, you may question him, but he doesn't know where I live. I brought him away in the middle of the night; he can't find his way back.

“I respectfully take my leave. I don't give my name, as I might be punished.

“And he has not a single kreutzer by him, for I have nothing myself. If you won't keep him, you must knock him on the head or hang him up.”

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The letter was undated, and bore the inscription, "From the Bavarian frontier; place not named."

Enclosed was another note, written apparently with the same ink, but in Latin characters :

"The boy is baptised ; his name is Kaspar ; his other name you must give him. I ask you to bring him up. His father was a trooper. When he is seventeen, send him to Nuremberg to the Schmolischer Regiment ; that is where his father was. I beg you to bring him up till he is seventeen. He was born on April 30th, 1812. I am a poor girl ; I can't keep the boy ; his father is dead."

Naturally, Captain von Wessenig was puzzled to know what to do. Fortunately the Commissioner of Police, with whom he had been driving, was with him, and agreed to take charge of the boy, who, the Captain tells us, seemed "to be entirely uneducated and, so to speak, in a state of Nature." He was most reluctant to leave the stable when Mesk arrived to remove him to the police station, and complained of pain in his feet.

At the police station he was told to write down his name and place of residence. He sat down at once and wrote quite legibly, "Kaspar Hauser." When the police corporal pressed him to say whence he had come, he answered, "I

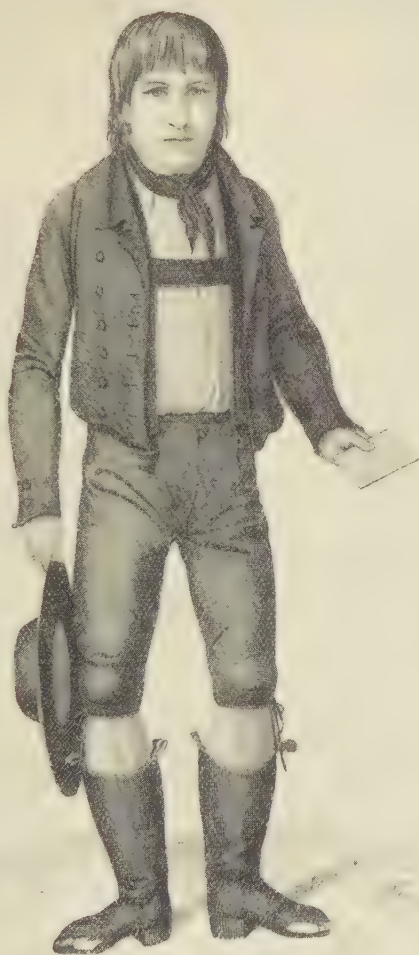


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dare not say," adding, "Because I don't know." That was all that could be got out of him.

This account of the first appearance of the famous foundling of Nuremberg, Kaspar Hauser, has been taken from the sworn depositions of Weichmann, Mesk, Hacker, von Wessenig and other eye-witnesses. It differs in countless particulars from the versions which have appeared from time to time, but it is probably as near the truth as it is possible to attain. We may note a substantial agreement among the witnesses on certain points. The boy, though obviously tired and footsore, was well able to walk. His vocabulary was limited, but he could talk intelligibly, if not intelligently, within those limits. Apart from the oddity of his clothes, there was nothing very remarkable about him, either as regards his physique or appearance. He did not impress any of those who first saw him as being a wild man or a freak, unused to human society or the sights of civilisation or the light of day. They seem to have set him down as a peasant lad, of little intelligence and less education, but no more extraordinary than any other village idiot astray from the care of his family.

Unable or unwilling to give any coherent account of himself, Kaspar Hauser was now transferred to a prison cell in the castle, to reach which he had to climb a flight of ninety-two steps. His pockets were searched, and were found to



*Kaspar Hauser.*

*The above fac simile is taken from one of the earliest signatures of Caspar Hauser, after his arrival at Nuremberg.*



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contain a rosary, a worn-out key, a prayer book and some religious tracts ; nothing, in short, to give a further clue to his identity or origin. And the boy himself, perhaps alarmed by his formidable surroundings, became even more shy and silent than he had been before. He shrank from people who came near him, wept copiously, and would touch no food except black bread, and no drink except water. His gaoler, Hiltel, who watched him closely, was convinced that the boy was neither a wrong-doer nor an impostor, but in behaviour and intelligence resembled a two years old child.

Meanwhile in Nuremberg the story was going the rounds, and lost, we may be sure, nothing in the telling. It was said that a mysterious wild man had arrived in the town and was lodged in the castle. In a short time the place was besieged. The visitors included municipal officers, men of letters, science, medicine and plain curiosity, and an army of sensation-hunting ladies, with toys and silly questions. In short, the stranger became an even more popular peep-show than the kangaroo or the tame hyena in von Aken's menagerie.

In time the boy's shyness wore off. He got accustomed to the relays of inquisitive visitors, to the learned gentlemen who mouthed polysyllabic German words over him, and to the kind ladies who brought him trifles for his entertain-

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ment. He even submitted to his callers' experiments. Apart from continual cross-examination, they dosed him with wine and beer and coffee, in order to observe the disastrous symptoms that ensued; they gave him milk and meat, which made him almost as ill; they threatened him with a naked sword, to see if he shrank from it; and they showed him coins and other glittering objects, so that they might witness his glee. Until the novelty wore off, Nuremberg behaved like a child with a new toy.

The boy, it must be owned, responded well. When first imprisoned Kaspar seemed to lose the small vocabulary with which he had arrived. He was almost dumb, only speaking a few monosyllabic words. Every animal he called "horse," every person he called "boy." As gradually his speech improved, his visitors and gaoler congratulated themselves that they were teaching him to talk. His intelligence had suffered the same set-back as his vocabulary. He had trudged through Nuremberg tolerably well, without being overpowered by the sights of the streets. But in the castle it was found that he could scarcely walk, that he had not learnt how to use his limbs or even how to focus his sight on a distant object, and that light caused him almost intolerable pain. Apparently he knew nothing of the world around him. He could not distinguish between men and women, or between

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humans and animals, or even between what was alive and what was not. He fed his toy horses punctiliously, adorning them with the ribbons his visitors had brought him, and weeping over the usual nursery tragedies that occurred.

As time passed and he began to find (or to recover) the use of his tongue, he was at last able to gratify the insatiable desire of his visitors to know the secret of his past life. He succeeded in unfolding a tale which not only failed to dispel the mystery, but actually increased it. This was his story.

All of his life that he could remember, he said, had been passed in a cell six or seven feet long, four feet wide and five feet high, with two small windows, boarded up. He had never stood up; he had never lain down. When awake he had sat upright, when asleep he had leaned back on a truss of straw. He had never been aware of any change of temperature, or seen a human being, or heard a sound of any kind. Each morning, when he awoke, he would find by his side a pitcher of water and a loaf of rye bread. He did not know how they came there, regarding them, as a child might regard the sunshine or the rain, as something which just happened. Sometimes the water had a curious taste and made him feel sleepy.<sup>1</sup> There were two wooden horses and a wooden dog in the cell, and for several years he

<sup>1</sup> "Opium, of course," muttered his hearers.



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amused himself playing with them, running them about and decking them with ribbons.

But one day his routine was sharply broken. A stool was put across his knees, and on it was laid a sheet of paper. An arm came over his shoulder, and a pencil was placed in his hand and guided over the paper. After this had been repeated several times the arm disappeared, leaving pencil, paper and stool behind. "I never looked round to see to whom the arm belonged. Why should I? I had no conception of any other creature beside myself." This new game temporarily superseded the horses. He went on copying the characters his guided hand had traced, and so, after a little practice, he was able to write his name.

A few days later the arm, doubtless fired by an educational triumph of which it had just reason to feel proud, reappeared. This time, however, it was a voice, and taught him to talk. Wisely, it was not too ambitious; but it managed to teach him the word "horse," and to imprint on his virgin brain one or two simple sentences, such as, "In the big village where my father is I shall get a fine horse," and, "I want to be a trooper, as my father was." With these achievements the voice was content, and retired, leaving him to play with his toys. But Kaspar made so much noise, doubtless airing his new gift of speech, that presently the voice returned; only

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this time it had unfortunately become an arm again, and wielded a stick, which took Kaspar a further and more painful stage in his education.

A day or two later the arm and the voice, in fact the entire man, reappeared in Kaspar's cell. He had come to take him away. While the boy was asleep his clothes had been changed and a pair of tight boots put on his feet. The man now lifted him up and carried him on his back out of the cell and up a steep incline, evidently a flight of stairs, into the open air. So the journey began. It should have been a lengthy business, for in the course of it Kaspar seems not only to have considerably enlarged his vocabulary, but also to have learnt the meaning of his companion's words; so that when the man said, "Leave off crying at once or you shall not get that horse," he instantly obeyed. Yet, to the best of his recollection, he only took food once on the journey; so, after all, he cannot have travelled a great distance. Kaspar also learnt to walk a little by himself, but he never saw his companion's face, and was naturally so dazzled by the sunlight that he had no idea where he was going or through what sort of country he was passing. At length he and his guide reached the city of Nuremberg, and the man, placing in his hands a letter, said, "Go there—where the letter belongs," and vanished

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Astonishing as it must appear, the good people of Nuremberg lapped up this story greedily. All sorts of confirmatory evidence was discovered, and the few doubters were silenced by a roar of indignation. Kaspar, it is true, played his part pretty well, though with occasional lapses which seem to have escaped both his audience and his biographer, Feuerbach. Thus, although the latter particularly comments on Kaspar's remarkable memory for faces, ten days after the boy's arrival he failed (or pretended to fail) to recognise his first friend, Herr Weichmann, and declared that he had never met the man. Or again, to select one instance out of a number, after he had been a few days in Nuremberg he professed astonishment at the sound of church bells, which he said he had never heard before ; yet in his own account he stated that on the first morning of his imprisonment the striking of the town clock frightened him. These trifling discrepancies are typical. In six weeks he was able to tell the Mayor, Herr Binder, the story of his life, and before the year was over he had actually committed it to writing.

Meanwhile the police were trying hard to trace Kaspar's antecedents, and if possible to run to earth the man who had brought him to Nuremberg. All their efforts failed. No one came forward to claim the boy ; no one could be found who knew anything about him or who had seen

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him on his strange journey. On 7th July the Mayor published his story ; Kaspar was formally adopted by the municipality ; and a sum of money was voted for his upkeep and education.

Among the learned men who took an interest in the foundling was a Professor Daumer, by all accounts a harmless crank. He soon discovered that Kaspar, in addition to a very fine tale, possessed, as a result of his unique upbringing, all sorts of marvellous magnetic powers. He was intensely sensitive to the presence of metals, could detect the faintest odours at a great distance, and so forth. The Professor, who had taken upon himself to try to educate the boy, varied his instruction with a series of homœopathic experiments, productive of the most gratifying results. So clearly was the man marked out to be Kaspar's guardian that the Mayor had no hesitation in committing the foundling to his care.

The arrangement did not work. Although the Professor put a stop to the peep-show business, Kaspar was allowed to pay visits, to attend receptions and to be lionised. He soon showed as much ardour as anyone in canvassing the great question of his parentage and history. All were agreed, of course, that he must be Somebody—somebody, that is, of sufficient importance to be worth keeping in a cellar for sixteen years. Who could he be ? Someone certainly of noble,

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probably of royal, blood. A searching investigation of the family history of the ruling houses of Germany led these mystery-hunters to the Grand Duchy of Baden. But of this we shall hear more later. At this stage the important point is that Kaspar's head was turned by these romantic speculations. He started to give himself airs, to discover new wonders about himself, to seek a little more of that hidden past of his and—to make mistakes. People began to detect discrepancies in his statements, and caught him fibbing about trifles, such as where he had been the previous afternoon, or what someone had said to him. Even the credulous Daumer reluctantly came to the conclusion that his charge was not as truthful as he should be.

Something else happened, too. As the months slipped by, the public, notoriously fickle, began to find other and fresher topics of conversation. There were signs that people were getting a little weary of the subject of their foundling, and were looking for some new sensation.

This regrettable tendency was checked when, on 7th October, the city was startled by the news that an attempt had been made on the foundling's life. He had been found unconscious in the cellar of the Daumers' house. Across his forehead was a deep cut, which was bleeding freely. He was carried upstairs to bed, and was very ill for a couple of days. On recovering, he had a



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long and not too plausible tale to tell. While in the Daumers' backyard he had been attacked by a man masked by a black handkerchief and armed with a heavy knife. This man, whose voice he recognised as that of his old gaoler, had cried, "After all, you will have to die before you leave Nuremberg," and had dealt him a savage blow on the forehead. He had lost consciousness, and on the return of his senses had fled in fright and confusion to hide in the cellar. He gave a very full description of his assailant, who, he said, was wearing dark clothes, yellow gloves and polished black boots. Why this sinister figure should have bungled so badly as merely to inflict a trifling wound, neither Kaspar nor anyone else tried to explain. Moreover, though the city was full of people who knew somebody who had been told by somebody else of a dark stranger seen lurking in the streets or washing bloodstains off his hands, a thorough search both of the town and of the neighbouring countryside failed to reveal anyone answering to Kaspar's description of his would-be murderer. Still, the story served its purpose. The foundling once more became the centre of attention, and two policemen were told off to guard his precious person.

Daumer now asked to be relieved of his responsibility. He had done his best for the boy. He had treated him as one of the family, had



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tried to educate and amuse him, and had even arranged for him to have riding lessons, a form of exercise in which, despite his physical disabilities, Kaspar became proficient very quickly. But all his kindness had been thrown away. It appears that on the morning of the day when the dark stranger made his attempt, Daumer had detected the boy in a glaring falsehood, and there had been a scene. He found that Kaspar's "nature had lost much of its original purity, and that a highly regrettable tendency to untruthfulness and dissimulation had manifested itself." In fact the poor Professor was a disillusioned man, and must have wondered uneasily to what extent those earlier experiments of his, reported with such extravagant enthusiasm, were genuine, and how far he had been consciously assisted by his subject.

His resignation was accepted, and a certain Freiherr von Tucher, a man of excellent character, was appointed guardian in his place. Kaspar left the Daumers' house and went to lodge with a merchant named Biberbach, who gave him free quarters. The change was by no means a success. The Biberbachs soon found, as the Daumers found before them, and as others were to find after them, that Kaspar was vain, lazy, and an incorrigible little liar. There were scenes, quarrels, recriminations. Finally, one day, a shot was heard in Kaspar's room, and the two policemen

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on duty, rushing in, found the boy bleeding and senseless on the floor, with a discharged pistol beside him. The tactless celerity of their arrival forestalled any attempt on Kaspar's part to conjure up the stranger in black, so he explained that while standing on a chair to get down a book he had slipped, clutched at a pistol which hung on the wall, and accidentally shot himself. The bullet, it is scarcely necessary to add, had merely grazed his temple.

After this episode the Biberbachs had had enough. They pleaded "urgent private affairs," and passed Kaspar on to his guardian, von Tucher.

But the foundling had lately found a new friend. It happened that Lord Stanhope, a grandson of the great Earl of Chatham, and a very fair example of the eccentric "milord" of Continental tradition, was passing through Nuremberg. Hearing of Kaspar, of the mystery of his birth and of the attempt at assassination, he wanted to see the boy. At that time no visitors were allowed, but when he revisited the town in 1831 he repeated his request and obtained the necessary permission. He met Kaspar, was at once won over by him, and believed most, if not all, of his history. He immediately constituted himself the foundling's champion, and offered a reward of five hundred florins for information which should lead to the discovery

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of his origin. Further, since Kaspar had recently appeared to recognise some Hungarian words and had fallen into convulsions when the town Posenbya (Pressburg) was mentioned, he arranged for the boy to be taken to Hungary by von Tucher and Major Hickel. The journey, of course, was fruitless, but Lord Stanhope's interest was unabated. Herr von Tucher found him a most unsettling influence, and at length told him roundly that his kindness was turning Kaspar's head, and that either his visits must cease, or he must take charge of the boy himself. Simultaneously the authorities of Nuremberg, who were getting rather tired of their foundling, or perhaps scented an inexpensive way of getting rid of him, threatened to cut off the monthly allowance they had been paying; and there was even talk of apprenticing him to a bookbinder, in order that he might learn an honest trade.

Lord Stanhope fell into the trap. His offer to take charge of the boy was accepted as eagerly as it was made, and before he left for England he installed Kaspar in Anspach, in the house of a Doctor Meyer, with Major (now Colonel) Hickel as tutor, and the Mayor of Nuremberg, succeeded later by von Feuerbach, as guardian.

All this suited Kaspar very well, much better than bookbinding, which sounded too like hard work to be to his taste. Now, as the *protégé* of an English "milord," he gave himself more airs.

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He threw out fresh hints of Hungarian parentage, and, when the maiden name of Countess Maytheny was mentioned, screamed, "That is my mother." The clue was followed up by Hickel, who made a second journey to Hungary, of which the only result was to cause considerable annoyance to certain noble Magyar families.

Very soon neither Meyer nor Hickel had any illusions left about Kaspar. Even Lord Stanhope was beginning to regret his impetuous generosity. They had found, just as everybody who was in close contact with Kaspar was bound, sooner or later, to find, that he was almost incapable of speaking the truth; and, faced with his habitual mendacity in everyday matters, they could hardly refrain from doubting his entire story.<sup>1</sup>

In May, 1833, von Feuerbach died. Lord Stanhope, in appointing a guardian to take his place, made a fresh announcement of his intentions. Though he had ceased, he explained, to credit in its entirety Hauser's account of his upbringing, he would continue to look after the young man and to provide for his maintenance and education. To this end he had secured him an annuity by a codicil to his will. He added, however, that Kaspar, in his own interests, should be entered at once for some suitable profession.

<sup>1</sup> Lord Stanhope : *Tracts Relating to Kaspar Hauser.*

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Meyer and Hickel accepted this decision with satisfaction, and in July, 1833, Kaspar was given a post as clerk in the Anspach Chancellery. Naturally, this by no means accorded with the ideas of a young man who had not quite decided whether he was the son of a German prince or a Magyar nobleman, but who expected at worst to be the cherished ward of an English peer. He neglected his new work; he played truant; he was in continual trouble with Meyer and Hickel. On 9th December, matters came to a head in a stormy scene between Meyer and his charge, which ended for the latter in tears and promises of amendment. A few days later the final catastrophe occurred.

On the afternoon of Saturday, 14th December, Meyer and his wife were sitting together at home, when Kaspar burst into the room in fearful agitation, displaying a wound in his breast. He seized Meyer by the arm and dragged him into the street towards the Hofgarten. In reply to Meyer's questions he could only gasp, "Went — Hofgarten — man — had knife — gave bag — stabbed — ran as hard as could — bag still lying there."

As Kaspar was clearly in no fit state to be about, Meyer persuaded him to return home and be put to bed. Doctors were summoned, and police were despatched at once to the Hofgarten, where they picked up a silk bag



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containing a pencilled note in "looking-glass language."

"To be delivered.

"Hauser will be able to tell you exactly how I look, and whence I come. To save Hauser the trouble, I will myself tell you where I come from.

"I come from . . .

"The Bavarian frontier . . .

"On the river. . . .

"I will even give my name as well.

"M. L. OE."

The doctors, meanwhile, had found a small wound on the left side of Kaspar's breast. The injury did not appear serious, and on the 16th and 17th the police were allowed to take evidence.

Kaspar told them that on Saturday morning a strange man in a workman's blouse had brought him an invitation from the head gardener to come to the garden that afternoon at half-past three to see some specimens of clay from a new artesian well. He had gone, and, finding no one at the well, had wandered on to the memorial to the poet Uz. Here he had been accosted by a tall, red-faced man of about fifty, with black moustache and whiskers and wearing a cloak and black hat. This man had thrust a bag into his hands and stabbed him. Kaspar had dropped the bag and run home as fast as he could. It was



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a wild afternoon of snow and sleet, and save for himself and the stranger the garden was deserted.

On the evening of the 17th, Kaspar's condition suddenly became critical, and at ten o'clock that night he died. During his last hours he expressed penitence for his shortcomings, and sent a message to Lord Stanhope adjuring him to "Keep on the right road, that the faults from which he too is not quite free <sup>1</sup> do not overcome him." But neither by word nor implication did he retract his account of the meeting in the Hofgarten, nor did he betray the smallest anxiety to know the contents of the silk bag, on the recovery of which he had at first been so insistent.

The *post-mortem* showed that the injury was far more serious than had at first been supposed, the weapon having passed through the lung and actually penetrated the heart. As to its cause, the two doctors disagreed, one believing that Kaspar (who was left-handed) had stabbed himself, the other that he had been murdered.

The policeman, who had been sent at once to the Hofgarten, had found in the snow the footprints of one man only—Kaspar. No weapon was discovered, though some years afterwards a dagger, which might have inflicted the wound, was dug up. The town and surroundings were closely searched, and, though rumours and reports

<sup>1</sup> Presumably lack of faith in Kaspar was one of them.

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abounded (as before at Nuremberg), no reliable witnesses appeared who had seen a man answering to Kaspar's description of his assailant, or even a stranger of suspicious appearance. The note found in the bag was written on paper which matched some that was found in Kaspar's waste-paper basket, was folded exactly as Kaspar used to fold his notes, and contained a favourite grammatical error of his.

There can be very little doubt that Kaspar's account of the meeting in the garden was an invention, and that he himself inflicted the fatal wound. Not, of course, that he meant to kill himself, but in order to revive public interest in his person some startling dramatic event was essential. At Nuremberg he had engineered a similar outrage, with the satisfactory result that he had again become the talk of the town. He must have resolved to try the old trick once more. But sham suicide is a dangerous game, and at Anspach he overreached himself. It was a cold day, and he was wearing a thick, padded coat. To pierce it he must have had to use considerable force, and, unless he was very careful, the effort would have driven the knife further home than he had intended.

The judicial enquiry into the affair, which lasted for nine months, ended in a verdict that Kaspar Hauser had not been murdered.

That, it might be supposed, would have been

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the end of the business. Kaspar's imposture was pretty clear; a number of people had made fools of themselves; and the sooner the episode was forgotten the better pleased, one would suppose, everybody would have been. But Kaspar's death seemed, on the contrary, to blow the embers of controversy into flame. All over Germany champions emerged and parties were formed, and in the course of fifty years a mass of tedious literature piled itself round the story.

We have had the facts. It remains for us briefly to examine the legend.

The responsibility for starting it lies firstly on von Feuerbach, the eminent jurist who for a short time was Kaspar's guardian. He died, it is true, before the final event, but not before he had completed a most unlawyerlike work entitled *Instance of a Crime against the Life of the Soul of Man*.<sup>1</sup> Von Feuerbach implicitly believed Kaspar's account of his confinement, and even swallowed the story of the assault on him at Nuremberg. It has even been suggested that when he wrote his book he was already suffering from senile decay. Certainly we cannot feel much confidence in the man who told Lord Stanhope that the early records of Kaspar's arrival and life in Nuremberg would lead people to "conceive Kaspar to be an impostor," and "ought to be burned." He himself blandly

<sup>1</sup> Translated into English under the title *Caspar Hauser*.

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ignores these records and produces a version of his own that differs in many important particulars from the depositions of eye-witnesses. These witnesses, it is true, when re-examined in 1834, made substantial additions to the statements they had sworn in 1829; but there is no reason to suppose that they were romancing. Von Feuerbach, on the other hand, gives no authority for his facts, and the book throughout is written in an exaggerated and highly injudicial style.

Another writer who should have known better was Professor Daumer, the gentleman of the homœopathic experiments, who in 1859 produced a book on Kaspar Hauser.<sup>1</sup> Although he had ceased to believe in Kaspar's veracity, he still accepted his story, to which he added plenty of embroidery of his own. His theory was that Kaspar was heir to a great English property, and that his unnatural relations had packed him off at an early age to Hungary. Lord Stanhope had adopted him for the express purpose of making away with him, had poisoned von Feuerbach, had tried to terrorise Daumer himself, and had of course arranged the murder of Kaspar. Daumer got these curious ideas from a book by Countess Albersdorf, a mischievous and scurrilous old lady who had a personal grudge against Lord Stanhope, had a way of bringing wild charges against inno-

<sup>1</sup> *Revelations on Kaspar Hauser, by his former tutor.*

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cent people, and was described by the Commissioners before whom she gave evidence as “an extremely loquacious, foolish and confused witness, bent upon repeating upon hearsay all the gossip of the town.”

Helped on its way by a multitude of pamphleteers and publicists, the legend reached its maddest and merriest in a book entitled *The True Story of Kaspar Hauser, from Authentic Records*, written by Miss Elizabeth Evans and published in 1892. The story is as untrue as her records are unauthentic.

She begins at Baden, to whose Royal house she makes a present of Kaspar. In September, 1812, a son and heir was born to the Grand Duke Karl and his wife, but while Baden rejoiced that the male line of Zähringen should be carried on, in the background lurked the wicked Countess Hochberg, brooding over her shattered hopes. The Countess was a promiscuous lady who was simultaneously the morganatic wife of the late Grand Duke and the mistress of his son Ludwig. She had borne several children, of uncertain paternity, but as in either case the father had grand ducal qualifications, she resolved that the way must be made clear for the succession of her eldest son. With the active connivance of Ludwig and the expert assistance of a Major Hennenhofer, a villainous adventurer, she carried out her devilish plot. There was an old legend that



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before the death of a member of the Royal Family a ghost known as "The White Lady" might be seen walking the palace. The Countess resolved to impersonate this apparition. She procured an infant of about the same age as the little prince, gave it a preliminary dose of poison, and, dressed all in white, carried it past terrified lackeys and corrupt accomplices through a secret door into the grand ducal nursery. Here she effected the necessary change, retiring with the rightful heir, whom she handed over to Major Hennenhofer. He had his orders. He carried the infant off to the lonely hunting lodge of Falkenhaus, where Kaspar grew up in the way which he afterwards described to the people of Nuremberg.

Meanwhile, of course, the substituted child had died, and, when the reigning Grand Duke was gathered to his fathers, the Countess Hochberg, who spent her declining years busily putting away (generally by poison) all possible heirs and inconvenient witnesses, had the gratification of seeing her son's eventual succession secured. The wicked Ludwig became Grand Duke, and, after the death of the Countess in 1820, carried on the good work with the sole aid of Major Hennenhofer.

The little prince was now growing up; and, in spite of the physical disabilities caused by his captivity, he might become a problem. What



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was to be done ? Hennenhofer was all for a dose of something, a course which, curiously enough, apparently never occurred to that arch-poisoner, the late Countess. But Ludwig—poor man !—had qualms. He knew that he had not long to live, and perhaps the memory of the Hochberg holocausts weighed on his spirits. Then someone conceived the brilliant idea of taking the youth out of his prison and letting him loose in Nuremberg as a potential cavalry recruit. This was done, but, extraordinary to relate, the boy's arrival set people talking unpleasantly near the truth. Ludwig died ; Hennenhofer remained ; and the talk grew louder and more threatening. Exposure seemed imminent. Only the death of the young prince could avert it, so death was the sentence this evil fellow passed. His first attempt, while the boy was at Nuremberg, failed ; the second, at Anspach, succeeded, and the Major was saved.

Are we, then, to suppose that Lord Stanhope, who was so cruelly handled by Professor Daumer, is discharged by Miss Evans without a stain on his character ? Not at all. We are told that, so far from being a rich " milord," he was a penniless and desperate adventurer, suborned by the Baden conspirators to remove Kaspar from Nuremberg, where he was among friends, into the clutches of his vile creatures, Meyer and Hickel. In fact, " Stanhope was the most

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despicable of all the actors in that fearful tragedy.”<sup>1</sup>

And the authority for all this? The most important document is Major Hennenhofer's *Memoirs*, in which he confessed his share in these crimes. That sounds pretty good, until we find that the *Memoirs* were stolen by a discontented clerk, and were about to be published in Switzerland, when the Government of Baden protested and the authorities suppressed the book. The Major may have committed many crimes, but to his dying day he protested that he had never written his *Memoirs*, and those who saw the suppressed extracts pronounced them without hesitation to be forgeries.

Of course, Miss Evans had other sources of information besides Major Hennenhofer. There was Kaspar's alleged resemblance to the Grand Duchess Stephanie, wife of Karl. There was a cryptic document, signed “S. Hanes Sprancio”—obvious anagram for “Kaspar Hauser”—fished up out of the Rhine in 1816, in which Kaspar, aged four, pleads in Latin to be rescued. (It is true that Miss Evans suggests that someone wrote the message for him.) Then there are innumerable anonymous letters, random statements, disavowed documents and wild rumours, all of which are fitted carefully into the tale.

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Evans: *The True Story of Kaspar Hauser, from Authentic Records.*

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Everything is fish that comes to Miss Evans's net. Those who did not believe in Kaspar had either been bribed or intimidated; those who did believe in him were witnesses of unimpeachable veracity; and almost everybody in South Germany who was connected, however remotely, with the affair and had the misfortune to die in the first half of the nineteenth century, was poisoned either by the Countess Hochberg or by Major Hennenhofer.

This is the kind of stuff which Kaspar's champions poured out. In Germany, however, it is possible to libel a dead man, and in 1883 Dr. Meyer's sons took action against a particularly outrageous polemic. The publisher made no attempt at defence, had to pay a fine and costs, and was compelled to destroy the edition. Miss Evans, of course, was perfectly safe in publishing her contribution in England, but even in Germany the output of the Kasparites continued, though more circumspectly.

The ordinary person may be pardoned for enquiring what all the pother was about. There is something very artificial about the whole mystery. There was an apparent determination to reject any obvious explanation: such as that Kaspar Hauser was what he appeared to be, an undeveloped peasant lad, of whom his parents wished to rid themselves; that he had just enough sly intelligence to act a part sufficiently

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well to deceive those who were really anxious to be deceived.

The suggestion is rather an anti-climax, and, as such, is probably unacceptable to people who like their mysteries highly spiced ; but it is about as near the truth as we are ever likely to get.



*THE MYSTERY OF LORD  
KITCHENER'S DEATH*







## THE MYSTERY OF LORD KITCHENER'S DEATH

**I**N an earlier book, *Mysteries of the Sea*, I gave a fairly full and, as I believed, unprejudiced account of the tragedy by which, on 5th June, 1916, H.M.S. *Hampshire*, with Lord Kitchener on board, struck a German mine and sank off Marwick Head in the Orkneys. About a year after the publication of my book, statements began to appear in the Press challenging the veracity of the accepted narrative, which in the main I had followed, and alluding to facts of great importance which had been deliberately withheld from the public knowledge and which threw an entirely new light on the story.

These statements I propose to examine in detail. First, however, let me briefly recapitulate the facts, as recorded and generally believed, of the catastrophe which led to the death of Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War, at a crisis in the fortunes of the Allied nations.

In the early summer of 1916 the War Cabinet thought it desirable that Lord Kitchener should pay a visit to Russia, where the situation had

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already become rather disquieting. A decision was not definitely taken until 26th May, when the necessary instructions for the journey were sent to Lord Jellicoe, the Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet. After an exchange of messages it was eventually arranged that the party for Russia should sail from Scapa Flow on 5th June in H.M.S. *Hampshire*, a light cruiser of the *Devonshire* class.

Lord Kitchener, who was accompanied by Colonel Fitzgerald and a small staff of officers and servants, left London on the afternoon of Sunday, 4th June, and, after lunching next day with the Commander-in-Chief in the *Iron Duke*, went aboard the *Hampshire* at 4 p.m.

The route which the cruiser was to take was selected by Lord Jellicoe himself just before she sailed. According to his original plan, she would have followed a course along the east coast of the Orkneys, the usual route from Scapa Flow to Norway. The waters through which she would have passed were occasionally visited by enemy submarines, prowling about the fringes of the Grand Fleet, but, as the *Hampshire* was to have an escort of two destroyers, no great risk from this quarter was anticipated. On the morning of 5th June, however, a strong north-easterly gale was blowing up, so that this particular route was likely to be exposed to the full fury of the storm, and it might prove difficult for the de-



LORD KITCHENER LEAVING THE "IRON DUKE"  
JUNE 5TH, 1916

*By permission of Sir George Arthur and the  
Kitchener Memorial Fund*



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stroyers effectually to screen the cruiser. With this consideration in mind Lord Jellicoe countermanded his first order, and from two alternative routes chose a course which skirted the western coast of the islands.<sup>1</sup> So far as was known no mines had been laid on this route, which was constantly used by Fleet auxiliaries.

The *Hampshire* left Scapa at 4.45, and soon ran into a very heavy sea. At 6.30 the escorting destroyers, hard put to it in the teeth of the gale to keep up with the cruiser, which was steaming fifteen knots, were ordered to return to the base. The *Hampshire* went on alone.

At 7.40 or 7.45 the cruiser was about a mile and a half from the shore, between the Brough of Birsay and Marwick Head, when an explosion occurred which, by the accounts of the survivors, seemed to tear the heart out of the ship. Her steering gear, electric power, light and wireless all failed at once, and she began to settle by the head. Between ten and twenty minutes later she sank, bows first.

So swift was the disaster and so wild was the weather that not a single boat could be launched. An unsuccessful effort was made to lower the captain's galley, for the accommodation of Lord Kitchener, who was seen, however, some moments later, standing on the quarter-deck with a few of his staff. Just before the ship went down

<sup>1</sup> Jellicoe : *The Grand Fleet*.



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numbers of the men managed to get clear of her in floats. They had a fearful passage through the storm, standing up to their chests in icy water, swept incessantly by the waves, and, as they neared the shore, being buffeted with brutal force against the rocks and cliffs of the coast.

Of all these men only twelve survived their ordeal. Lord Kitchener, his staff and some six hundred and forty of the officers and crew of the *Hampshire* perished.

The cause of this tragic event was established beyond reasonable doubt when, a few days later, a group of moored German mines was discovered near the spot where the *Hampshire* was last observed. Later, when German sources of information became available, the whole story emerged. Towards the end of May, in preparation for the sortie which was to end in the Battle of Jutland, minelaying submarines of a new type were sent by the Germans to lay mines across the possible exits from Scapa ; and one of these submarines, the *U. 75*, is actually known to have laid the mine which destroyed the *Hampshire*.<sup>1</sup> Until the Battle of Jutland no submarine minelayers had operated north of the Firth of Forth, so that Lord Jellicoe in his calculations had reckoned only on surface craft, which, owing to the very short period of darkness in northern latitudes during

<sup>1</sup> Von Scheer : *Germany's High Sea Fleet*.

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the summer months, could hardly have laid mines since the channels had last been swept.

That, in brief, is what actually happened. That is what, for nearly ten years, the ordinary man, with only a vague knowledge of the details, accepted as the truth, what none but crank or mystery-maker might doubt. In November, 1925, however, a remarkable series of articles by Mr. Frank Power began to appear in a London newspaper, securing the enthusiastic support of crank and mystery-maker, and causing much bewilderment to a good many ordinary men.

The articles, which continued every Sunday into the summer of 1926, explained to the British public that they had been badly hoodwinked over the circumstances of Lord Kitchener's death; that much vital evidence had been suppressed; and that the disaster to the *Hampshire* was no accident, but the climax of a black conspiracy, in which the machinations of the enemy had been materially aided by the criminal carelessness of some of our own people in high places.

Mr. Power's case, appearing Sunday after Sunday, was not very easy to follow. Sometimes his statements were a trifle contradictory. Also, he was careful to whet the appetite of his readers by giving them only a little at a time, and by suggesting that there were more tit-bits to follow. He would throw out a hint, and several Sundays

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might pass before the hint had become a statement and the statement a definite charge.

So, throughout the winter, he gradually unfolded his case, and though most of his articles were subsequently reproduced in a volume,<sup>1</sup> the book was merely a reprint, and his points have still to be extracted from a long series of instalments.

Let us take his principal charges, one by one.

He began by asserting that the secret of Lord Kitchener's journey was betrayed by the Tsar to Rasputin, the notorious monk who stood so high in the Imperial favour, and by him through an intermediary to Sturmer, the head of the German Secret Service in Russia. Thus the Germans were fully aware of the projected journey, and were enabled to make their dispositions accordingly.

Next, the *Hampshire*, in which Lord Kitchener sailed, had been chosen for the purpose with fell intent. She was a "coffin ship," an old vessel which but for the war would have been scrapped. In 1916 she was sent to Belfast to refit, but was recalled before the work was finished, so that she could take part in the Battle of Jutland. Her keel was not properly scraped, her sea-cocks were defective, and her boilers needed repairing. Moreover, she had an ugly reputation. A few months before, when she was taking Lord

<sup>1</sup> Frank Power : *The Kitchener Mystery*.

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Kitchener to Greece, an enemy submarine had fired a torpedo at her which had "missed the vessel by inches." Someone had been caught signalling to the submarine and had been court-martialled and shot. On another occasion, while she was manœuvring in the North Sea, some of her guns misfired, and it was found that one of the electric controls had been tampered with. Again the offender was tracked down and shot. During her refit at Belfast several sinister episodes had occurred. There was a mysterious internal explosion, time bombs were discovered in the coal bunkers, someone was caught meddling with the electric switches, there was a mutiny among the stokers, and two more men were shot. Most of this information was obtained by Mr. Power from "an officer who perished." Much of it seems scarcely relevant to Lord Kitchener's journey, except as indicating rather vaguely that anyone who wanted to get rid of him would probably ship him to Russia in a really unpleasant vessel like the *Hampshire*, in which bombs and spies were almost endemic.

In London, too, treachery was afoot. Mr. Power told of a wicked siren, Elbie Boecker, who had relations with several British officers, among them a young man on Lord Kitchener's staff. From him she extracted the date and route of the *Hampshire's* voyage, items of information which she at once transmitted to Germany.

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Elbie, however, must share the credit with another miscreant, an old Boer lady, who during the South African War had had her farm burnt (by Lord Kitchener's orders), and had been sent with her family (again by Lord Kitchener's orders) to a concentration camp, where her mother had gone mad and her little boy had died. Thenceforth she had lived for revenge. Being in England and learning of Lord Kitchener's journey, she and her son, who was in the last stages of consumption, had slipped an infernal machine among the *Hampshire's* stores. (We are not told how she accomplished this difficult feat.)

The journey to Russia, therefore, was doomed to disaster before it started. There was the *Hampshire*, so old and rotten that it was unfit to make the voyage. There were the mines which the Germans, acting on Sturmer's and Elbie Boecker's information, hastened to lay across her route. There were the time bombs which the spies at Belfast had smuggled aboard. There was the revengeful Boer lady's infernal machine. Further, the Germans being thorough people who take no chances, the *Hampshire*, we are told, was put on a course which, even if she had weathered the seas and dodged the mines and survived the bombs, would have piled her up on a dangerous reef!

But it was for our own high authorities that Mr. Power reserved his gravest insinuations and



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his choicest invective. Of necessity he wrote guardedly. Those weekly columns with their flaring headlines left us a little uncertain of the indictment. Was it merely criminal negligence, or was it something worse? Sometimes he seemed merely to be accusing these great ones of the most blundering carelessness and incompetence, but at other times his accusations, if they pointed to anything at all, pointed to the blackest of treachery. There was, for instance, that letter from "an officer of high connections and an extremely meritorious record." No name was given, but Mr. Power was not over-fond of supplying names. This officer reported that shortly before the Russian journey Colonel Fitzgerald wrote him a most significant letter. "The political situation at home was unbearable." "A person whom you and I know, who is coming with me, is the centre of disgraceful and base intrigues day and night." "If I do not return with my friend you may be sure that foul play has probably been the means of our not doing so."<sup>1</sup>

That seems to implicate the Government.

Then we must not forget that, despite the portents of spies and mutinies and time bombs, Lord Kitchener was sent to Russia in the "coffin ship," an "old tub" unfit to make the voyage. Here, surely, the Admiralty enters the dock.

And who was responsible for the choice of the

<sup>1</sup>Power : *The Kitchener Mystery*.



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*Hampshire's* route ? The point is important, as Mr. Power made much of the "fact" that on 2nd June, three days before the *Hampshire* sailed, a trawler, the *Laurel Crown*, was actually sunk by a mine laid in the same waters by the same submarine. Why was the *Hampshire* deliberately sent through an unswept minefield, the existence of which must have been known to the Admiralty and the Commander-in-Chief at Scapa ? We know that the *Hampshire's* route was selected at the last moment by Lord Jellicoe himself. So he too was in the conspiracy, it seems. Yet in another issue of the London newspaper Mr. Power assured us that one of his motives in demanding an inquiry was his desire that "fairness should be done to the gallant Admiral." And, lest any should suspect a grim innuendo behind these words, he added : "It seems to me an ever-increasing shame that he should have to bear the stigma also of the neglect over Kitchener, which, of course, no one conceives for a moment was due to him personally." "Let us clear Jellicoe !" he concluded. All this is rather puzzling. Until Mr. Power's articles appeared in the London newspaper no one had seriously suggested that Lord Jellicoe needed "clearing." The idea first emerged out of Mr. Power's evidence ; and if Lord Jellicoe deliberately sent the *Hampshire* across an unswept minefield, why was Mr. Power so anxious to clear

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him ? We may be permitted to wonder whether Lord Jellicoe felt a due sense of gratitude towards his self-constituted champion.

Wellnigh as serious are Mr. Power's strictures on "official apathy" when the *Hampshire* was reported in distress off Marwick Head. At Stromness, five miles away, was a lifeboat and rocket apparatus, and plentiful supplies of men were impatiently awaiting the order to go to the rescue. But the order was never given, and offers of service were curtly refused. The coxswain of the lifeboat was even told to "mind his own bloody business," and soldiers who started for the shore were ordered back to their lines. The Vice-Admiral at Long Hope (Admiral Brock) refused to be disturbed ; the senior naval officer at Stromness had no "official information," and could therefore take no action ; and Colonel Slater, commanding the Royal Garrison Artillery at Kirkwall, did nothing.

There was worse to follow. The inhabitants of the west coast of the Orkneys were told to stay in their houses, and volunteer rescuers were driven back from the shore by a patrol "at the point of their rifles." In fact, such attempts as were made to rescue survivors of the *Hampshire* were undertaken by stray parties of men acting on their own initiative and in defiance of the authorities.

But for this strange and calculated inaction,

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urged Mr. Power, many more of the *Hampshire's* men might have been saved, and among them, we learn with amazement, Lord Kitchener himself. For Lord Kitchener did not go down with the ship, as was reported. He embarked in a pinnace with several members of his staff, including Colonel Fitzgerald. The boat was driven on to the rocky shore, and after "a terrific struggle with the waves" Lord Kitchener, exhausted but alive, reached a low rock. Two other men had scrambled ashore near by, and, had aid been forthcoming, all three might have been rescued. But no one came, and in the morning one of the men crawled off to try to bring help. The other man, described as "a private soldier," remained with Lord Kitchener. Unfortunately he was a spy, one of many who at different times had served in the *Hampshire*, but who, more fortunate than some of his comrades, had escaped shooting. He took advantage of the third man's absence to attack the Field-Marshal; they fell struggling into the sea, and, when the other returned, he saw "two dark objects being tossed about by the waves." Later, help arrived, but too late either to save Lord Kitchener or to catch the spy.

Who, it may be asked, was the survivor with this dramatic disclosure to make? He is Mr. Power's trump card. In all the official documents only twelve survivors are mentioned, but

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Mr. Power discovered a thirteenth. Of course, he was not at liberty to disclose the man's identity. "He has not only been spirited away like the others, but, having a more unpleasant story to tell, has been comfortably provided for and secured for life, so long as he holds his tongue."<sup>1</sup> An excellent excuse for reticence! Later, indeed, Mr. Power reported the existence of two more unrecorded survivors, but they are important rather because they give the lie to the Admiralty figures, than because they can offer any fresh evidence of value.

Just as heinous as negligence or treason before the act was the conspiracy of silence entered into by the Admiralty and other Government departments afterwards. The proceedings of the Court of Inquiry were never published, because, explained Mr. Power, they were too incriminating to be allowed to see daylight. There was a second and sensational Report which had been hidden away in the Admiralty archives. There was a secret *dossier*, proving every one of Mr. Power's statements. There were reports from Scotland Yard, and so forth. All was kept in an inviolable secrecy, which Mr. Power considered it his duty to break.

Without giving more than these salient points in the indictment, it will be clear that, although Mr. Power declared that "the essence of my

<sup>1</sup>Power : *The Kitchener Mystery*.

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charge against the Admiralty is negligence," his charge was really a good deal stronger. He was accusing it of being an accessory before the fact in sending Lord Kitchener to certain death in a crazy ship through mine-sown waters, of being an accomplice in the crime by withholding and even preventing aid, and of being an accessory after the fact by suppressing the truth.

Mr. Power's articles naturally attracted a lot of notice. The Admiralty's disclaimers, rather belated, consisted of bald and uncommunicative denials, wrung from reluctant Ministers at question time in the House of Commons. People were not satisfied. Mr. Power succeeded in arousing the interest of several members of Parliament in his charges, and even Sir George Arthur, by an unfortunate letter to the *Times*, gave colour to the impression that he too was a convert. Mr. Power managed to involve the British Legion in his agitation, and claimed to have received letters of support from about a hundred branches. There was talk of starting a Kitchener League which should force the authorities to a full disclosure.

In February, Mr. Power sprang another surprise upon the readers of his Sunday newspaper. He had found, he said, and purchased the very boat in which Colonel Fitzgerald's body was found and in which Lord Kitchener himself had reached the shore. It was exhibited, somewhat



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damaged, at the Terrace Garden, Kensington, and afterwards in a window in Oxford Street. To the man in the street there was something very solid and convincing about its shattered timbers.

In March, Mr. Power carried his agitation a stage further by holding a mass meeting at the London Opera House. About three thousand people were present, including a number of Agents-General from the Dominions (who can scarcely have been aware of what they were countenancing), one or two members of Parliament, and a fair muster of minor celebrities. But, judging by appearances, the bulk of the audience was of the type who are persuaded that Shakespeare never wrote the *Plays*, or who clamour for the bishops to attend the opening of Joanna Southcote's box, or who believe with the fervour of fanatics that the British people are descended from the Lost Tribes of Israel. It was, in short, a Cranks' Sabbath, at which Mr. Power repeated his accusations and evidence at some length and in a most sympathetic atmosphere. Then there was a free film display, in which episodes from Lord Kitchener's life, charts of the *Hampshire's* route, and domestic scenes from the Orkneys were thrown on the screen. After that, Mr. Power ushered on to the stage three survivors—bewildered A.B.'s, who stood first on one leg and then on the other.



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Finally, he put to the meeting a fiery resolution which was received with rapturous applause. The protest of a single heroic dissentient in the stalls created such a commotion that for a moment there was a prospect, not altogether unpleasing, that the meeting would dissolve in disorder. Unfortunately this was averted by a stout gentleman who appeared from the wings and sang "Land of Hope and Glory" in a voice so dominating as to defy competition.

The meeting was followed by more articles, more questions in the House and more agitation. At last Mr. Power overreached himself. He announced that a careful study of the currents in the North Sea had satisfied him that Lord Kitchener's body must ultimately have been washed ashore at a certain point on the coast of Norway. He believed that the spot—and, indeed, the grave in which the body had been buried—could be found; and declared his intention of going to Norway, of exhuming the body, and of bringing it home to receive the State burial which was Lord Kitchener's due.

The rest of the story is comparatively fresh in our memories. Mr. Power embarked on his search, the success of which he triumphantly proclaimed on 8th August. Some days later he arrived back in London with a coffin which held, he asserted, the remains of Lord Kitchener, and which he deposited in a mortuary. At this point

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the Home Office acted. The mortuary was visited by the police, and the coffin, on being opened, was found to contain nothing but some tar.

Further enlightenment was soon forthcoming. The Norwegian Government denied that it had given Mr. Power any faculty to open a grave, or that, to the best of its belief, any grave had been opened by him. A few days later the coffin was traced as having come direct from the Orkneys. Meanwhile the Admiralty had at last broken its silence and published an Official Narrative<sup>1</sup> of events connected with the loss of the *Hampshire*. Even the Sunday newspaper, awakening to a belated sense of its obligations to its readers, demanded an explanation from Mr. Power, and as none worthy of the name was forthcoming, the entire agitation burst like a bubble.

Unfortunately, when a fabrication has once appeared in print, it always seems to reach a far wider circle of readers than the exposure that follows on its heels. However convincing the refutation may be, and however wide the publicity given to it, there is invariably a residue of people who, through ignorance or temperament, believe that there was "something in the story." Consequently, although Mr. Power is no longer treated seriously by anyone with the smallest claim to intelligence, some of the mud he has

<sup>1</sup> *Cmd.* 2710.

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thrown has stuck, and there are probably still many who refuse to believe that all those charges which he brought with such earnestness and conviction are pure moonshine. For their benefit a few facts may be added.

That Lord Kitchener's intended journey was known to the Germans is possible, but that the report reached them from this country is unlikely. Only half-a-dozen men at the Admiralty were in the secret, and of these not more than two or three were acquainted with the details of the plan. But whether the Germans knew of the journey or not is beside the question, for it is quite certain that the mine-laying of the *U. 75* had nothing to do with it, but was part of the preparations undertaken by the German Navy before the Battle of Jutland. This is proved by Admiral von Scheer's Report on the battle, which gave an outline of the preliminary operations undertaken and showed the actual track of the *U. 75*. A moment's reflection is equally conclusive. If the *U. 75* had been laying mines for the express purpose of catching the *Hampshire*, she would have laid them off the east coast of the Orkneys, on the normal route from Scapa Flow to Norway, and not off the west coast. The choice of the unusual route followed was dictated at the last moment by Lord Jellicoe, and the suggestion that he deliberately sent Lord Kitchener to his death is too ridiculous to be expressed even

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by Mr. Power. As for the incident of the *Laurel Crown*, there is an error in dates for which the Admiralty printer was responsible. The *Laurel Crown* was actually sunk on 22nd June, not on 2nd June, seventeen days after, and not three days before, the *Hampshire* went down.

Mr. Power's description of the *Hampshire* as a "coffin ship" was as grotesquely inaccurate as the evidence with which he supported it. She was first commissioned in 1905, and was therefore not an old ship in anything but a highly technical sense. Her refitting at Belfast was completed in February, 1916, some months before Lord Kitchener's journey to Russia had been decided upon. The work was not in any way scamped, and if her keel and boilers were in poor condition, it is strange that she should have reached, as she reported, a speed of twenty-one knots at the Battle of Jutland. Lord Kitchener went to the Dardanelles and Greece in the *Dartmouth*, not in the *Hampshire*, the only previous occasion on which he had travelled in the *Hampshire* being in 1912. No spies were shot aboard her. In order to shoot a spy you must convene a court-martial, and no court-martial, naval or military, was ever held in the *Hampshire*. The Belfast episode, of which Mr. Power made so much fuss, arose out of a very trivial incident. A shipyard worker on board, who had served in the Artillery, was found to have meddled out of

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simple curiosity with a small shell of a new type which he saw lying on the deck. Any suggestion of foul play was completely disposed of by a confidential inquiry, the mere fact that one was held being the source of all Mr. Power's rumours of spies and infernal machines.

When we come to the actual sinking of the Hampshire, we find Mr. Power as misleading as ever. The escort returned to Scapa, not, as he suggests, on their own initiative, but on signalled orders, duly recorded, from the *Hampshire* herself. Steaming against a north-easterly gale they could not keep abreast of her, and Captain Savill, forced to choose between reducing his speed or dispensing with his escort, decided that the latter alternative was the better.

So we come to the explosion and the events which followed on board the ship. All twelve survivors gave evidence at the inquiry. Ten only heard one explosion, while two reported noticing subsequent explosions which apparently occurred in the neighbourhood of the boiler rooms. There was no imputation that any of these explosions was caused by a bomb.

There is not an atom of evidence that Lord Kitchener left, or even attempted to leave, the ship. All the survivors were positive that not one of the boats got away, the only suggestion which could be interpreted in a contrary sense coming from a man who heard the Captain calling



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to Lord Kitchener to get into a boat ; he did not, however, see him come to it. The skiff dinghy, exhibited with such triumph by Mr. Power, was probably one of the *Hampshire's* boats, though it is uncertain whether it was on board when she sank, or had previously been condemned and dumped ashore. In any case, it had no connection with either Lord Kitchener or Colonel Fitzgerald, the latter's body, which Mr. Power asserted had come to land in the dinghy, having been picked up in the bay by the crew of the *Flying Kestrel*. How the dinghy ever came into private possession is a minor and irrelevant mystery.

The Official Narrative<sup>1</sup> gives an excellent summary of the facts.

“ These conclusions are that the *Hampshire* was a suitable ship to select for the conveyance of Lord Kitchener, and was in an entirely efficient condition ; that her route was carefully selected by the Commander-in-Chief, and that his decision was a prudent one in the difficult circumstances of the moment ; that the loss of the ship was not due to treachery, but to her striking one or more moored mines laid by the *U. 75* ; that these mines were not laid with any knowledge of the *Hampshire's* mission or any intention of destroying any particular vessel or person ; that the only

<sup>1</sup> *Cmd. 2710.*



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survivors from the *Hampshire* were one warrant mechanic and eleven men, of whom the full names and details were published at the time ; that there is no evidence that Lord Kitchener ever left the ship, and that none of the survivors saw any boat with occupants get clear of the ship."

The reports of official apathy are quite untrue. The news that a cruiser was in difficulties off Marwick Head was at once telegraphed in duplicate from Birsay to Kirkwall and Stromness, though the first messages did not make it clear that the ship in question was the *Hampshire*, or that she had actually sunk. The message reached Admiral Brock at 8 p.m., less than twenty minutes after the *Hampshire* had struck the mine, and he at once gave orders for certain vessels to stand by. A further telegram from Birsay, reporting "Vessel down," reached Stromness just after 8.30, and the trawlers *Jason II.* and *Cambodia* immediately put out to sea. A tug and two more trawlers followed at 8.45, three destroyers left at 9.10 and a fourth at 9.20, while later on in the night five more destroyers, a yacht and a trawler left for Marwick Head. All these craft met a full gale as soon as they reached the open sea, and, though they were steaming at top speed, the first of them did not reach the neighbourhood of Marwick Head until between 10 and 10.30. They spent the remainder of a very dirty

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night searching the adjacent waters for possible survivors.

The allegation that the services of the Stromness motor lifeboat were offered and were refused, or that the boat was not allowed to put to sea, is totally unfounded. Captain Walker, the Commander of the Western Patrol, against whom these charges were directed, is dead and cannot defend himself. But undoubtedly he had good reasons for not calling on the lifeboat to assist; he had plenty of naval vessels at his disposal, and, in the judgment of qualified persons in Stromness, the boat would have been useless in existing sea conditions.

Action almost equally prompt was taken on shore. A rescue party, fully equipped, left Stromness in two cars shortly after 9 p.m., and bodies of Territorials and civilians from Birsay and Marwick (with the active encouragement of the authorities) also hurried to the scene. During the night the whole of the difficult stretch of coast between Birsay and Stromness was thoroughly and systematically searched. That the survivors were so few must be attributed to the violence of the storm and to the fact that the floats on which the men were trying to reach the shore were beaten against savage cliffs, where even in fine weather landing is difficult; not, certainly, to "official apathy," and still less to lack of goodwill on the part of the authorities.

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Mr. Power's discovery of three unreported survivors has been categorically denied, and, as he failed either to produce or to name them, we need not allow them to trouble us further.

There remains the suggestion that the whole affair was hushed up by the Admiralty in order to screen certain persons from the consequences of their own negligence or malice. As it is clearly established that there was no one to screen, this charge becomes ineffective. Yet it must be confessed that to some extent the authorities have themselves to blame for bringing it down on their heads. For some months they allowed Mr. Power to thrill and scandalise his Sunday readers unchecked, when a frank statement like the Official Narrative, issued at once, would probably have scotched the whole business. There are times when the most silent of Services should become articulate. Undoubtedly the Admiralty was in possession of facts not disclosed to the public. It is not customary to publish the official proceedings of Courts of Inquiry of this kind, held in time of war, and much of the evidence in question, such as the statements of some of the survivors, was of a kind to cause unnecessary pain to the relatives of those who had lost their lives. The layman may think it would have been wiser to have placed the information unreservedly at the disposal of a man like Sir George Arthur, Lord Kitchener's official biographer, and to have

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coached Mr. Bridgeman a little more tactfully before he went down to answer questions in the House of Commons ; but an ill-judged reticence is really all that can be laid to the Admiralty's charge.

As for Mr. Power, his motives remain the outstanding mystery at the end of an unfortunate episode. That there is not a vestige of truth in his charges is now obvious. That so many people of presumed good sense should have been found to encourage him and to foster his nonsensical accusations provokes some interesting reflections on human gullibility.







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